

# THE IRRESISTIBLE MOVEMENT OF DEMOCRACY

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“I see from the East unto the West, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, in spite of what misled, prejudiced, unjust, and wicked men may do, the cause of freedom still moving onward; and it is not in human power to arrest its progress.”—JOHN BRIGHT, 1863.



## PREFACE

The object of this book is to tell the story of democracy from its first beginnings in the modern world until its culmination in our time. The idea was first suggested to me by trying to understand what was meant by the famous phrase used during the world war,—“to make the world safe for democracy.” It suggested the questions, What was democracy? What were the advantages of a form of government for which the world was striving? If democracy was attained, would it be a gain for humanity? Democracy has always been difficult of definition and much misunderstanding of its true nature has arisen because men have used the term in different senses. Democracy may mean either a spirit of society, a state of society, or a form of government. I have taken democracy in the usual meaning as accepted by Bryce, Lecky and Maine, as a form of popular government. In this general sense it has been used by modern writers, and its modern advent dates from the time when nations and men began to seek a form of government based upon the popular will as expressed in universal suffrage.

How this movement began, what were the forces which led to its expansion, how it gradually emerged from the old society, is the story of the development of political ideas and the realisation of these ideas in the forms of government of America, France and England. The spread of these ideas and the gradual imitation of the democratic form of government in other countries are the result of the example and influence of these three nations.

In dealing with such a large subject, covering such a long period of time, it was inevitable that there must be some limitation in the method of treatment. While the political ideas of Greece and Rome had much influence on the modern development of democracy, and modified, to some extent, the opinions of the democrats in America and France, yet the interval of time between that period and the time when democracy assumed its modern form, seemed to justify omitting this early history. So, too, the experience of the Italian, Swiss and Dutch republics while it influenced the writers on democracy in the eighteenth century, yet it contributed little to the democratic movement.

It is to English ideas and principles of popular government worked out on English soil that democracy owed its first impulse; and the movement of democracy was born out of the struggle for English liberty which came to a climax in the seventeenth century. Its advancement, however, did not make much headway until about the year 1765, and since that time, it has had a rapid development whose progress has been marked by revolutions in government and society which have ended not only in changing the ideas of the people but the forms of government under which they lived.

The principles of democratic government have been treated by a host of writers, distinguished for their erudition and political knowledge, but the histories of these times have only incidentally referred to the democratic movement. This movement was concerned with the ideas of liberty and equality which developed simultaneously in the old and new worlds and which arose under the pressure of the social and economic forces of the time. In the nature of the case, this history is limited to the striking events and the ideas of the leading men who contributed to its advance and expansion.

The marked characteristic of this movement has been its irresistible nature and its steady advance in spite of opposition of individuals and governments. Some few statesmen in the different periods of its development have recognised this peculiar characteristic, but most men have been blind to the signs of the times and have only recognised the force of the democratic movement after it had achieved its end in changing the form of government.

In the preparation of this book I have consulted many works by writers who took part in the events which they record and many documents of the time. In other instances, I am indebted to authors who have written lives and memoirs of the democratic leaders and the history of the various revolutions which have marked the growth of democracy. The notes will supply a list of most of these writers, but other works which I have consulted are not mentioned in the notes though they have influenced my judgment on some controversial questions.

In writing this book I have had no special theory to sustain, or thesis to prove. My principal object was only to tell the story of the democratic movement. The conclusions to which I have come on the nature and character of democracy were slowly arrived at under the evidence of the facts of history. Moreover, while history cannot always be relied upon to predict future

events, yet it does throw light upon how men acted under the dominance of certain ideas and the motives which led to their conduct. It may be presumed that men will act in like manner when circumstances and ideas give rise to similar situations.

I desire to express my thanks to Mr. Briggs, the assistant librarian of the Widener Library, Harvard University, who placed at my disposal all the resources of a library rich in material bearing on this period of history, and also to the Director of the British Museum for giving to me the facilities of that storehouse of literature and the opportunity of consulting the manuscripts of Francis Place; and, above all, my thanks are due to my daughter, Edith, who has greatly aided me both in typewriting the manuscript and preparing it for the press.

JOHN SIMPSON PENMAN.

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BOOK I  
DEMOCRACY IN AMERICA



# THE IRRESISTIBLE MOVEMENT OF DEMOCRACY

## CHAPTER I

### THE ADVENT OF DEMOCRACY

DE TOCQUEVILLE has told us that his great work, "Democracy in America," was written with a mind constantly occupied by a single thought—"that the advent of democracy as a governing power in the world's affairs, universal and irresistible, was at hand"; and in his first introduction, written in 1835, he ventured to make this prediction: "The gradual development of the principle of Equality is a providential fact. It has all the chief characteristics of such a fact; it is universal, it is durable, it constantly eludes all human interference, and all events as well as all men contribute to its progress. Would it be wise to imagine that a social movement, the causes of which lie so far back, can be checked by the efforts of one generation? Can it be believed that the democracy which has overthrown the feudal system and vanquished kings, will retreat before tradesmen and capitalists? Will it stop now that it is grown so strong and its adversaries so weak?"<sup>1</sup>

It is now nearly ninety years since De Tocqueville uttered this remarkable prediction, and all the history of Western civilisation, since, has substantiated his foresight and furnished fresh evidence of the irresistible movement of democracy. What was considered then as merely the speculation of a political philosopher, has now become the accomplished fact of political experience. Whether we consider democracy merely as a spirit of society, or as a passion for equality, or as a form of political government, it has gone forward with irresistible power and seems destined to supplant all other forms of government.

The growth and expansion of democracy forms the epic history of the modern world. It is the story of the development of

<sup>1</sup> De Tocqueville, "Democracy in America," Vol. I, p. 5, introduction.

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human liberty, and its emergence in the life and government of a people in the New World marked a new era in the progress of humanity. It was in the last quarter of the eighteenth century that the first great example of democracy was revealed to the world which awoke in men the passion for equality and the desire for liberty. But while the democratic ideals and principles were first realised in America, they were borne to the western shore by the intrepid men and women who had been cradled in English liberty. Amid the turmoil and commotion of the Puritan Revolution of England in the seventeenth century, democracy was born, and it was the direct result of Puritan ideals and principles. However much the idea of democracy may have been taught by the speculations of philosophers before this time or by the experiments in self-government in the isolated cities of Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, they had been too weak to make headway against the increasing tendencies in those centuries towards centralisation in government and the autocracy of kings. It was Puritanism which set free men's minds and gave birth to the principles of religious freedom which suggested the principles of civil freedom in which democracy had its rise. The principle of equality in the church of the congregational polity gave rise to the idea of equality in the civil administration of the government. This tendency of the democratic spirit manifested itself in two great movements: one in the heart of the Puritan movement in England; the other in the Puritan exodus to America.

In England this movement of democracy was accelerated by the struggles and confusion over the ideas of government generated by the great civil war. While the conflict of Parliament with Charles I brought to the front the principles of the rights of Englishmen as expressed in the great acts of the Petition of Rights and the Grand Remonstrance, yet it also raised the questions of the liberty and sovereignty of the people as the ultimate foundation of all authority and government. When it became evident to the army that no terms could be made with King Charles and that there was no hope of settling the government on the basis of a constitutional monarchy, then the idea of a republic arose and the army became the champion of the democratic idea. This created a conflict with Parliament which still held that it represented the nation. In this struggle, the power passed from the Parliament to the army and the army gave expression to the democratic ideas which pervaded it by issuing, in 1647, the famous "Agreement of the People." This document

was the first attempt at a written constitution on English soil. It clearly affirms the idea of the sovereignty of the people. In its fourth article it says: "That the power of this, and all future Representatives of the Nation, is inferior only to theirs who chuse them, and doth extend, without the consent or concurrence of any other person or persons, to the enacting, altering, and repealing of lawes; to the erecting and abolishing of Offices and Courts; to the appointing, removing, and calling to account of Magistrates and Officers of all degrees; to the making War and Peace, to the treating with forraigne States; and generally, to whatsoever is not expressly or impliedly reserved to the representatives themselves."<sup>2</sup>

The constitution also demanded biennial Parliaments, universal suffrage, and a single representative house.

That these ideas went beyond what the leaders of the army thought was wise, was evident from the conflict which soon arose between the rank and file of the army and its officers. Cromwell was glad at the time to use the demands of the army to oppose the plans of the Parliament; but later he joined with his officers in opposing the army. He realised that the English nation was not ready for a form of government based upon universal suffrage. The ideas of the constitution were in advance of the age and its ideals of self-government were not capable of realisation in a nation which was still swayed by monarchical principles. While the ideas have a familiar expression to the modern man, yet they were too new and too strange to be accepted by the ordinary Englishman of that time. Moreover, they served to alarm the more conservative element of the nation and to consolidate the Royalist and Presbyterian forces in opposition to the Commonwealth. "The democratic principles," writes Gardiner, "to which the Independent leaders had given their voice were, in truth, as effectual in welding together Cavaliers and Presbyterians as were the principles of the French Revolutions in welding together the Tories and the aristocratic Whigs in 1793 and 1794. To the country gentlemen and the traders who formed the main basis of the Tudor monarchy, but of late had been divided by political and religious differences, the Agreement of the People was all that the Social Contract was to the men of the eighteenth century."<sup>3</sup>

For this reason, Cromwell found great difficulty in ever electing a Parliament which would be representative of the nation, and

<sup>2</sup> Bourgeaud, "Rise of Modern Democracy," quoted, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Gardiner, "The Great Civil War," Vol. III, p. 321.

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he was gradually forced to take over the supreme power and rule through a council of state. At the same time the seeds of democracy were planted in the minds of the common people which were destined to come to fruition in a later age. That democracy was then crushed is not surprising in view of the weight of tradition, custom, and habits of the English nation; but the democratic principles still survived, though in an obscure and humble form, in the colonies in the New World.

At the height of the Puritan movement, but before its democratic principles had been evoked by conflict and revolution, the Puritan exodus to America began and it was sustained by a continuous stream of emigrants who despaired of freedom in England under the iron rule of Charles I. Hampden and all the Puritans fostered this new enterprise and looked upon these colonies as a haven of refuge, if their fight for liberty in England failed. At the close of the great struggle for the Grand Remonstrance in the House of Commons in November, 1641, Cromwell, turning to Falkland on coming out of the house at two o'clock in the morning, said, "If the Remonstrance had been rejected, I would have sold all that I had the next morning, and never have seen England any more; and I know there are many other honest men of this same resolution."

But those who did embark for the New World were men of force and of character who stood for the principle of equality in their church life and were determined to establish a government on the same basis. They not only carried with them into their new home the ideas of English freedom, but the ideals of freedom based upon democratic principles. Before the Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* landed at Plymouth, they drew up a voluntary compact under which the body politic should be formed in the new land in which it was said: "We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign King James, do solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together, into a civil body politic for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof, to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most convenient for the general good of the colony. Unto which we promise all due submission and obedience."

This instrument was signed by all the men, forty-one in number, who with their families constituted the colony of one hundred souls. And "this," says Bancroft, "was the birth of popular

constitutional liberty. In the cabin of the *Mayflower*, humanity recovered its rights, and instituted government on the basis of 'equal laws' for 'the general good.'"<sup>4</sup> This form of government which was instituted by the early colonists was confirmed later by a charter granted by the king. And though between the Restoration and the Revolution of 1688, the democratic government was subjected to a severe strain from the menace of despotism in England, still the colonists managed to preserve their liberties until the Revolution established them on a secure basis. It was during this period that Connecticut and Rhode Island received liberal charters from Charles II which established the town meeting and local self-government.

That the idea of democracy flourished in America and failed in England was due to the fact that, in America, the colonists were left very much to conduct their own affairs on account of the turmoil and wars in England. After the death of Cromwell and the Restoration, the king was too indolent to give any thought to the colonies, and his government was too much occupied with English interests. But with the accession of James II and his interest in William Penn and the settlement of Pennsylvania, his attention was turned to the colonies of New England and he endeavoured to put the same check upon their liberties as he was carrying out in England. From 1685-88, great strides were made towards bringing the colonies under his despotic rule, and Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island were forced to give up their charters. But with the Revolution of 1688 in England and the establishment of the Bill of Rights, the edifice of autocracy fell to the ground. When the news of the Revolution arrived in America, the colonies overthrew the government of King James and returned to their old forms of self-government.

From that time until 1764, the colonists were left undisturbed in their rights of self-government. The Whig aristocracy which triumphed at the Revolution and which conducted the government during this period, left the colonies alone and in complete control of their own affairs. In all local interests, the people were supreme and voted their own taxes and elected their own officers.

The dependence of the colonies upon England was recognised by the appointments of the royal governors and in the Navigation Act which governed the laws of trade with other countries and restricted the trade of the colonies with England. Against this dependence, the colonies did not rebel so long as they were faced with danger from the French in Canada; but with the

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. I, p. 310.

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victory of the French war and the relief from any future aggression from Canada, a desire for independence began to awaken in the colonies. This spirit, however, would have made slow progress had it not been for the new policy of England to tax the colonies in the interest of the empire. When Grenville proposed this policy of taxation in 1764, he was met with decided opposition by all the assemblies of the colonies on the ground that the English Parliament had no right to levy internal taxes in the colonies. In spite of these protests, Grenville passed through Parliament the Stamp Act, in March, 1765, and at once the issue was raised of taxation without representation. At the time of the passing of the Act, its significance had not been perceived and it passed in Parliament in a very small House. There was little opposition except by the few men who understood American feeling and the pride of Americans in their rights as Englishmen. Barré protested against the tax, saying, that the colonists, as "sons of liberty" planted in America by the oppression and strengthened by the neglect of England, would oppose the tax and he predicted that "the same love of freedom which had led them into an uncultivated and inhospitable country, and supported them through so many hardships and so many dangers, would accompany them still, and would inspire them with an indomitable resolution to vindicate their violated liberty."

At first, however, the colonists appeared to be stunned by the act and were inclined to acquiesce in its provisions. The signal which started the spirit of opposition to the Stamp Act and kindled the fire of revolution was given by the House of Burgesses in Virginia. Patrick Henry, who had just been elected in May to the House, much to the consternation of the older and more conservative members, introduced five resolutions which denounced the Stamp Act as an infringement of the rights of Englishmen. These resolutions were hotly debated; but Henry won to their support the members of the upper counties and finally passed them through the House. In an impassioned speech, Patrick Henry defended the rights of the Americans and ended with these words: "Caesar had his Brutus; Charles the First, his Cromwell, and George the Third——" ("Treason!" cried the speaker; "Treason, treason," echoed from every part of the house). "It was one of those trying moments," we are told, "which is decisive of character. Henry faltered not for an instant; but rising to a loftier attitude, and fixing on the speaker an eye of the most determined fire, he finished his sentence with the firmest emphasis: 'may profit by their example. If this be



treason, make the most of it.' ”<sup>5</sup> This note of defiance electrified the House and awoke the spirit of opposition among its humbler members. Under this enthusiasm, the resolutions were passed, but in the case of the fifth resolution by only one vote. This reads: “Resolved, therefore, that the general assembly of this colony have the sole right and power to lay taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony; and that every attempt to vest such power in any person or persons whatsoever, other than the general assembly aforesaid, has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom.”<sup>6</sup>

“By these resolutions,” said Jefferson, “and his manner of supporting them, Mr. Henry took the lead out of the hands of those who had, theretofore, guided the proceedings of the house; that is to say, of Pendleton, Wythe, Bland, Randolph.”<sup>7</sup> And Henry, whose fame spread throughout all the colonies, became from this moment the leader and champion of American liberty. This is the “way the fire began in Virginia.” The flames spread rapidly. All the colonies at once protested against the Stamp Act. In Massachusetts, James Otis suggested calling a Congress of delegates from the thirteen colonies to consider the question. In New York a reprint of the Stamp Act was hawked about the streets with the title, “Folly of England and the ruin of America,” and a writer discussed the arguments of Grenville and gave utterance to these ideas, “The fundamental principle of the English constitution is reason and natural right. It has within itself the principle of self-preservation, correction, and improvement. The great fundamental principles of a government should be common to all its parts and members, else the whole will be endangered. If, then, the interest of the mother country and her colonies cannot be made to coincide, if the welfare of the mother country necessarily requires a sacrifice of the most valuable natural rights of the colonies—their right of making their own laws, and disposing of their own property by representatives of their own choosing—if such is really the case between Great Britain and her colonies, then the connection between them ought to cease; and sooner or later it must inevitably cease. The English Government cannot long act towards a part of its dominions upon principles diametrically opposed to its own, without losing itself in the slavery it would impose upon the colonies, or leaving them to throw it off and assert their freedom. There never can be a disposition in the

<sup>5</sup> Wirt, “Life of Patrick Henry,” p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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colonies to break off their connection with the mother country, so long as they are permitted to have the full enjoyment of those rights to which the English constitution entitles them— They desire no more; nor can they be satisfied with less.”<sup>8</sup>

Taking up the idea of Barré, many colonies organised bands of the “Sons of Liberty” and a determined opposition was shown to the enforcement of the Stamp Act. Riots broke out in Boston and the mob destroyed the property of the stamp collector and attacked the home of the governor. Everywhere men began to talk of natural rights and their rights as Englishmen. They quoted Locke to the effect that he had said that “no man has a right to that which another may take from him”; and also Sir Edward Coke, who said in the great controversy over the Petition of Rights in 1628, “Loans against the will of the subject are against reason and the franchises of the land. What a word is that franchise! The lord may tax his villein high or low, but it is against the franchises of the land, for freemen to be taxed but by their consent in parliament.”<sup>9</sup>

As the controversy continued and the opposition deepened, men were led to search for the foundations upon which the principles of self-government and liberty rested. By their utterances, the leaders stirred in the masses a new sense of the value of their liberties and awoke a passion for the principles of democracy. “The people,” said John Adams, “the populace, as they are contemptuously called, have rights antecedent to all earthly government—rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws—rights derived from the Great Legislator of the Universe.”

At the meeting of the Congress of the colonies held at New York in October 1765, when it was proposed by Otis to found the opposition of the colonies not only on their liberty, but also on their chartered rights, Livingston, of New York, protested against pleading the rights of the charters from the crown. And Gadsden, of South Carolina, expressed the common view when he said: “A confirmation of our essential and common rights as Englishmen may be pleaded for charters safely enough; but any further dependence upon them may be fatal. We should stand upon the broad common ground of those natural rights that we all feel and know as men, and as descendants of Englishmen. I wish the charters may not ensnare us at last, by drawing different colonies to act differently in this great cause. Whenever that is the case, all will be over with the whole. There ought to be no

<sup>8</sup> Bancroft, “History,” Vol. V, pp. 281-4.

<sup>9</sup> Forster, “Life of Sir John Eliott,” Vol. II, p. 122.

New England man, no New Yorker, known on the continent, but all of us Americans."<sup>10</sup>

General Gage wrote to Conway complaining that the Congress was filled with a spirit of democracy and that the delegates talked about the independence of the colonies, and that "the question is not of the inexpediency of the Stamp Act; but that it is unconstitutional and contrary to their rights."

The Congress passed a Declaration of Rights, consisting of thirteen articles, "respecting the most essential rights and liberties of the colonists, and of the grievances under which they labour, by reason of the several late acts of parliament." The second and third and sixth articles expressed the principles upon which this protest rested. 2. "That his majesty's liege subjects in these colonies are entitled to all the inherent rights and liberties of his natural born subjects, within the kingdom of Great Britain." 3. "That it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people, and the undoubted right of Englishmen, that no taxes be imposed on them but with their own consent, given personally, or by their representatives." 6. "That all supplies to the crown being the free gifts of the people, it is unreasonable and inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the British constitution, for the people of Great Britain to grant to his majesty the property of the colonists."

All this was to raise the issue that had been agitated in England one hundred and forty years before, and out of which developed the Puritan Revolution and the rise of the democratic movement. The appeal was now to the British constitution—to the Magna Charta, to the Petition of Rights, to the Bill of Rights of the Revolution of 1688; and to the development of these principles under the genius of Locke. In calling to the minds of the people these great principles of the English constitution, the leaders of the Congress were giving expression to those great principles of human liberty which, carried to their logical conclusion, were to call into being the republic and, later on, the democracy.

The opposition to the Stamp Act was so universal and widespread, that the British Parliament realised that it could not be enforced without invoking civil war. The new ministry under the Marquis of Rockingham determined to repeal it. In the course of the debate on the question, Pitt made his great speech in defence of the colonists and their rights under the British constitution. "On a question," he said, "that may mortally

<sup>10</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. V, p. 335.

wound the freedom of three millions of virtuous and brave subjects beyond the Atlantic ocean, I cannot be silent. America being neither really nor virtually represented in Westminster, cannot be held legally, or constitutionally, or reasonably subject to any money bill of this kingdom. The colonies are equally entitled with yourselves to all the natural rights of mankind and the peculiar privileges of Englishmen; equally bound by the laws, and equally participating of the constitution of this free country. The Americans are the sons, not the bastards of England. As subjects, they are entitled to the common right of representation, and cannot be bound to pay taxes without their consent." <sup>11</sup>

Grenville in reply had said, "That the stamp act is but a pretext of which they make use to arrive at independence. When I proposed to tax America, I asked the house if any gentleman would object to the right; I repeatedly asked it, and no man would attempt to deny it. Protection and obedience are reciprocal. Great Britain protects America; America is bound to yield obedience. If not, tell me where the Americans are emancipated? . . . The seditious spirit of the colonies owes its birth to the factions in this house." <sup>12</sup> Pitt immediately arose and said, "Sir, I have been charged with giving birth to sedition in America. They have spoken their sentiments with freedom against this unhappy act, and that freedom has become their crime. Sorry I am to hear the liberty of speech in this house imputed as a crime. But the imputation shall not discourage me. It is a liberty I mean to exercise." And then with rising fire, he went on to say, "The gentleman tells us America is obstinate; America is almost in open rebellion. I rejoice that America has resisted.' At the word, the whole house started as though their hands had been joined, and an electric spark had darted through them all. 'I rejoice that America has resisted. If its millions of inhabitants had submitted, taxes would soon have been laid on Ireland; and if ever this nation should have a tyrant for its king, six millions of freemen, so dead to all the feelings of liberty, as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would be fit instruments to make slaves of the rest. Upon the whole, I will beg leave to tell the house what is really my opinion. It is, that the Stamp Act be repealed, absolutely, totally, and immediately; that the reason for the repeal be assigned, because it was founded on an erroneous prin-

<sup>11</sup> Anecdotes of the Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. Edition 1793. Vol. II, p. 35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

ciple. At the same time let the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of legislation, and that we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever, except that of taking their money out of their pockets without their consent.' " 13

The Stamp Act was repealed but with a declaratory clause which recognised the power of Parliament to tax the colonies. When the news arrived in America, it was received with universal rejoicings and men paid little heed to the declaratory Act so long as it was not exercised. But unfortunately the ministry under the leadership of Townshend, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced another measure to tax the colonies on certain articles of trade, including tea. These taxes were justified on the ground that they were external taxes and differed in principle from the stamp tax. Moreover, the government sent over new regiments to strengthen the authority of the governors. These measures awoke again the agitation and served to keep alive the spirit of resistance. The contest over the Stamp Act had raised an issue over principles, which were not easily allayed and which awakened a discussion on natural rights which tended to weaken the force of all acts passed by the British Parliament.

In the meantime, the new taxes revived the old non-importation agreement in the colonies in which Massachusetts and Virginia led the way, and the spirit of resistance was aggravated by the policy of the government in quartering troops upon the people. In Boston, the troops were received with marked disfavour and were the cause of constant brawls with the people. These culminated in a street row in which the troops, in a moment of exasperation, fired upon the people and three persons were killed and eight wounded, thus creating such public indignation that the governor was forced to withdraw the troops from Boston and confine them in their barracks without the city. Such was the famous "Boston massacre," which was long remembered and was one of the causes of the Revolution.

When the news of the massacre reached England, Parliament recognised the wisdom of repealing all the taxes, save that on tea. The tax on tea was retained because the ministry was not willing to give up the principle of taxation by Parliament. After the repeal of taxes, the movement of non-importation of manufactures from England subsided, and all articles were imported with the exception of tea. Moreover, to remove any

<sup>13</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. II, pp. 391, 395.

further cause of dispute, the ministry appointed Mr. Hutchinson, a native of Massachusetts, as governor, and his entrance into office marked the beginning of better relations between the colony and the mother country. Under the new régime the spirit of opposition died down and the controversy over colonial rights ceased for a time to agitate the people. But Samuel Adams, who saw that nothing essential had been changed and divined the true purpose of the government, lamented this apathy of the people. "I confess," he wrote, "we have, as Wolfe expressed it, a choice of difficulties. Too many flatter themselves that their pusillanimity is true prudence; but in perilous times like these, I cannot conceive of prudence without fortitude."<sup>14</sup> Even John Adams had retired from political life and devoted himself to his profession.

The general state of feeling at this time was well expressed by Hutchinson, who wrote to England that he found a "disposition in all the Colonies to let the controversy with the kingdom subside"; and that "Hancock and most of the party are quiet; and all of them, except Adams, abate of their virulence. Adams would push the Continent into a rebellion to-morrow, if it was in his power."<sup>15</sup> This was undoubtedly true. Samuel Adams was the one man who saw the real spirit of the British ministry and discerned its purpose to gradually invade the rights of the colonists. The ministry, in 1773, had instructed Hutchinson to secure the appointment of judges independently of the colony and to make them dependent upon the crown for support. Adams saw that this step was but the beginning of a new movement to limit the rights of the people; but the plans of the ministry were so insidious that it was very difficult to awaken the people to the danger to their liberties. He finally evolved the idea of forming a committee of correspondence whose business would be to enlighten the people and keep them informed on the progress of events; but there was nothing tangible as yet to make necessary the formation of such a committee. However, the next year, Governor Hutchinson sent a message to the General Court, urging it to discourage town meetings. This at once raised a storm of protest, and the General Court said that "its inhabitants have, ever had, and ought to have, a right to petition the King or his Representative for the redress or the preventing of grievances; and to communicate their sentiments to other towns."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. VI, p. 402.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 428.

Here was the opportunity for which Samuel Adams was waiting and he seized upon this discussion of the rights of the town meeting, to move the appointment by the Assembly of a committee of twenty-one to state the rights of the colonists and "to communicate and publish the same to the several towns in this Province and to the world, as the sense of this town, with the infringements and violations thereof, that have been or from time to time may be made; also requesting of each town a free communication of their sentiments on this subject."<sup>17</sup> The Assembly readily assented to this resolution, but leading citizens declined serving on the committee. However, it was constituted with Adams and Joseph Warren as its leaders and the committee organised itself into an executive council with full powers of action and pledged its members of "honor, not to divulge any part of the conversation at their meetings to any person whatsoever, excepting what the Committee itself should make known." This secret caucus now became the centre of revolutionary propaganda and soon wielded an immense influence over men and events. The idea of a secret committee was eagerly seized upon by the patriots in Massachusetts and many towns followed the example of Boston and organised committees of correspondence. These committees formed centres not only for expressing, but for creating public opinion. Adams next turned his attention to the other colonies and wrote to Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia. The idea caught fire and Virginia formed a committee in close correspondence with that of Massachusetts. The patriots in New York as well as those in Philadelphia organised on the same lines and soon committees were formed which took the lead in the agitation for a union of the colonies. Samuel Adams now became the leader and organiser of the Revolution with the avowed purpose of independence. He did not avow this purpose openly at this time; but he fomented and kept alive the spirit of agitation and seized upon all the mistakes of the British Government to further his ideas. He was the master mind in America directing the minds of his fellow-countrymen towards independence. He foresaw that the crisis was at hand and that the ministry had determined to put to the test the public opinion of the colonies. This was brought on by the decision of the ministry to allow the East India Company to send over to America a large quantity of tea which was subject to a tax of 3d. a pound. The people of Massachusetts determined to oppose the landing of the tea. A public meeting was held at Boston in which the consignees

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 429.

were asked to send the tea ships back to England. They refused even under great public pressure. Then the governor was appealed to, but without effect. Finally a body of about fifty men, disguised as Mohawk Indians, boarded the ships and emptied into the harbour 342 chests of tea. This drastic action, which precipitated the crisis, was thought necessary as a vindication of the principle of no taxation. John Adams' opinion of this action was probably the general feeling of the people. He says, "This destruction of the tea is so bold, so daring, so firm, intrepid and inflexible, and it must have so important consequences, and so lasting, that I cannot but consider it as an epoch in history. The question is, Whether the destruction of this tea was necessary? I apprehend it was absolutely and indispensably so. To let it be landed, would be giving up the principle of taxation by parliamentary authority, against which the continent has struggled for ten years. It was losing all our labour for ten years, and subjecting ourselves and our posterity forever to Egyptian task-masters; to burthens, indignities; to ignominy, reproach, and contempt; to desolation and oppression; to poverty and servitude." <sup>18</sup>

But Boston was not alone in its opposition to landing the tea. The same spirit of resistance was shown at New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston, and everywhere the colonists began to agitate again the non-importation agreements. The great question now was what would be the action of the British Government? The challenge of Boston was at once taken up by the king and his ministers. Parliament retaliated by passing in rapid succession five bills: 1. The Boston Port Bill, closing the port of Boston and transferring it to Salem; 2. The Bill for the better regulating the government of Massachusetts, abrogating its charter; 3. The Bill for trying all persons charged with murder in England; 4. The Bill for quartering troops; 5. The Quebec Act. To enforce these new measures, General Gage was appointed governor of Massachusetts and five more regiments were sent out from England to the colony. On the day that Gage sailed into the harbour of Boston, Samuel Adams presided over a public meeting to consider the Boston Port Bill and to solicit aid and sympathy from the other colonies. The demand was at once met by Rhode Island and Connecticut, which advocated holding a Continental Congress. Paul Revere, a mechanic of Boston, had been sent to New York and Philadelphia to stir up the "sons of Liberty" in those cities; and, for a moment, the popular move-

<sup>18</sup> Works of John Adams, Vol. II, pp. 323-4.



ment overawed the "feudal aristocracy" who had held control of the Assembly, and they united with the popular leaders in appointing a committee of fifty-one who favoured standing by Massachusetts. They proposed "a congress of deputies from the colonies to consider the question of non-importation and such action as would be helpful to Boston." They sent word to the Committee of Correspondence at Boston to fix the place and time of meeting of the Congress. In spite of the opposition of the Quakers and other influential and rich merchants, Philadelphia took the same ground, while in Virginia, the support for Boston was voted before its appeal was received. The Burgesses of Virginia met as usual in May, and the lead was at once taken by Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee, supported by Washington and Mason. Jefferson was appointed to draw up the resolutions in protest of the Boston Port Bill and to pledge the support of Virginia; and a day of fasting and prayer was set apart "to implore the Divine interposition for averting the dreadful calamity which threatened destruction to their civil rights, and the evils of a civil war; and to give to the American people one heart and one mind firmly to oppose, by all just and proper means, every injury to American rights." Governor Dunsmore immediately dissolved the House; but the burgesses at once adjourned to the Raleigh Tavern and under the leadership of the speaker, Peyton Randolph, voted that the attack upon Massachusetts was an attack upon all the colonies.

On the seventh of June, the General Court was held at Salem, and Gage, getting a hint of its purpose, had sent word to dissolve the meeting; but Samuel Adams, locking the door of the hall to keep out the messenger of the governor, gave time for the Court to pass the following resolution, "A meeting of committees from the several colonies on this continent is highly expedient and necessary, to consult upon the present state of the country, and the miseries to which we are and must be reduced by the operation of certain acts of Parliament; and to deliberate and determine on wise and proper measures to be recommended to all the colonies for the recovery and re-establishment of our just rights and liberties, civil and religious, and the restoration of union and harmony between Great Britain and America, which is most ardently desired by all good men."

The first of September was fixed for the time of the meeting and Philadelphia as the place. Five delegates were elected from Massachusetts for the Congress; namely, Thomas Cushing, James Bowdoin, Samuel Adams, John Adams, and Robert Treat Paine.

In the meantime, delegates were elected from the other colonies. The Congress opened on September 5th at Philadelphia and fifty-three delegates were present. The business of the Congress was devoted to three things: support of Massachusetts; declaration of colonial rights, and an address to the king. The decisions of this Congress mark the real beginning of the revolutionary movement; for it determined the course of action of the colonies, consolidated them into a union, made the cause of Massachusetts their own, and formulated the principles upon which the War of the Revolution was fought. These principles were embodied in the Declaration of Rights and Grievances by which the colonies took a long step forward on the road towards independence, though this question was as yet carefully kept in abeyance. The Declaration of Rights was only passed after considerable debate. Richard Henry Lee held that the rights were built upon "a four-fold foundation: on nature, on the British constitution, on charters, and on immemorial usage." Duane, of New York, thought that the grounds should be "the constitution and the charters without recurring to the law of nature"; but in the end the Rights were placed upon the broadest basis, and the essential principles of this Declaration were: "That the inhabitants of the English colonies in North America, by the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts, have the following Rights: 1. That they are entitled to life, liberty, and property, and they have never ceded to any sovereign power, whatever, a right to dispose of either without their consent. 2. That our ancestors, who first settled these colonies, were at the time of their emigration from the mother country, entitled to all the rights, liberties, and immunities of free and natural-born subjects, within the realm of England. 3. That the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government, is a right in the people to participate in their legislative council; and as the English colonists are not represented, and from their local and other circumstances, cannot properly be represented in the British parliament, they are entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their several provincial legislatures, where their rights of representation can alone be preserved, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign, in such manner as has been heretofore used and accustomed. But, from the necessity of the case, and a regard to the mutual interest of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British parliament, as are bona-fide, restrained to the regulation of our

external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the mother country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members; excluding every idea of taxation, internal or external, for raising a revenue on the subjects, in America, without their consent. 7. That these, his majesty's colonies, are likewise entitled to all the immunities and privileges granted and confirmed to them by royal charters, or secured by their several codes of provincial laws."<sup>19</sup>

As an infringement of these Rights, they specified the following Acts of Parliament, eleven in number: The Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, the two Quartering Acts, the Tea Act, the Act Suspending the New York Legislature, the two Acts for the trial in Great Britain of offences committed in America, the Boston Port Bill, the Act for Regulating the Government of Massachusetts, and the Quebec Act. Then the Congress adopted the following peaceful measures: "1. To enter into a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement or association; 2. To prepare an address to the people of Great Britain, and a memorial to the inhabitants of British America; and 3. To prepare a loyal address to his Majesty, agreeable to resolutions already entered into."

While the delegates were induced to unite in this declaration, yet it was on the distinct understanding that there should be no allusion to the "last appeal." A large portion of the wealthy and cultured people of New York and Pennsylvania were opposed to anything suggesting independence. They were afraid of the "levelling tendencies of New England" and looked with little favour upon the delegates from that section. John Adams tells us that the friends of the government in the Eastern States had represented their delegation as "'four desperate adventurers.' 'Mr. Cushing was a harmless kind of man, but poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity for his subsistence. Mr. Samuel Adams was a very artful, designing man, but desperately poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity with the lowest vulgar for his living. John Adams and Mr. Paine were two young lawyers of no great talents, reputation or weight, who had no other means of raising themselves into consequence, than by courting popularity.' We were all suspected of having independence in view."<sup>20</sup>

These views were quite prevalent and destroyed the influence of the delegation among many people in Philadelphia and New

<sup>19</sup> "Colonial and National Documents," p. 39ff.

<sup>20</sup> John Adams, "Works," Vol. II, p. 512. Letter, 1822.

York. Moreover, men of large property were fearful that if the Congress took too drastic action, they might be compelled to forfeit their property; and, for this reason, they were more inclined to sympathise with the British Government. This accounts for the fact that throughout the Revolution, a large portion of the population of New York retained their allegiance to the mother country. But in Virginia, the popular movement was led by many gentlemen of landed interest who did not hesitate to risk their lives and their fortunes in the cause of liberty and American rights. Their efforts were sustained by the democracy under the leadership of Patrick Henry and they made the cause of Massachusetts their own. Nevertheless, in none of the colonies did democracy exist on the basis of universal suffrage; but in the struggle for human rights, the popular leaders were led to formulate the principles upon which democracy rested and in their efforts to win over and to hold the people to the side of patriotism, to lay a great emphasis on the natural rights of man. Thus John Adams in his controversy with a Mr. Leonard of Taunton who had tried to frighten the people by pointing out the dangers from a break with England, pointed out the fallacies in many of Mr. Leonard's statements and went on to say, "That all men by nature are equal; that kings have but a delegated authority which the people may resume, are the revolution principles of 1688, are the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, of Sydney, Harrington, and Locke, of nature and eternal reason."<sup>21</sup>

Alexander Hamilton, who threw himself into the conflict on the side of the people in New York City in February, 1775, wrote: "The supreme intelligence, who rules the world, has constituted an eternal law, which is obligatory upon all mankind, prior to any human institution whatever. He gave existence to man, together with the means of preserving and beautifying that existence; and invested him with an inviolable right to pursue liberty and personal safety. Natural liberty is a gift of the Creator to the whole human race. Civil liberty is only natural liberty, modified and secured by the sanctions of civil society. It is not dependent on human caprice; but it is conformable to the constitution of man, as well as necessary to the wellbeing of society."

When his opponents advanced the argument against him that New York had no charter, Hamilton replied, "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the

<sup>21</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. VII, p. 232.

whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power. Civil liberty cannot be wrested from any people without the most manifold violation of justice, and the most aggravated guilt.”<sup>22</sup>

With such teachings and such leaders, the popular movement made rapid strides among the common people and they learned then the principles of human rights upon which they were to build up the edifice of democracy later. These ideas of Hamilton were all the more striking when it is recalled that New York was largely controlled by the “feudal aristocracy” outside the city who held their tenants to the old ideas and frowned upon all tendencies towards democracy. While the battle of Lexington only served to stimulate the patriotism and ardour of the people of New England and Virginia, it awakened the conservative spirit and intensified the opposition among the Tories and Loyalists of the middle colonies. And the battle of Bunker Hill only resulted still further in increasing the fears and alarm among these classes in New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, and Delaware. Here a strong party rallied around Dickinson and Galloway of Pennsylvania who demanded that Congress find some method of accommodation with Great Britain. So strong was this feeling that the popular party was restrained for more than a year from broaching the subject of independence. It was this period between the battle of Lexington and the Declaration of Independence that was one of the most critical in the Revolution. The slowness with which the colonies were brought around to this idea and the delicacy with which the ardent advocates of independence had to treat this issue, shows the strength of the opposition. About this time, a letter written by John Adams to Mr. Warren of Massachusetts was intercepted and published by General Gage. Adams had advocated independence and the formation of an American government. This letter brought upon him much obloquy, and Dr. Rush tells us, “I saw this gentleman walk the streets of Philadelphia alone, after the publication of his intercepted letter in our newspapers in 1775, an object of nearly universal scorn and detestation.”<sup>23</sup>

The necessity was felt for educating and enlightening the people on the question of independence and Franklin suggested to Thomas Paine that he issue a pamphlet on this subject. Paine submitted his manuscript to Franklin, Samuel Adams, and Dr. Rush and they advocated its publication. Rush gave it its title,

<sup>22</sup> Lodge, “The Works of Alexander Hamilton,” Vol. I, p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> John Adams, “Works,” Vol. II, p. 513. Note.

"Common Sense." It was a clear and forcible statement of the arguments for independence based upon history, the present situation of the colonies, and the need for a stable government. It also showed that independence was inevitable in the nature of the case and that it must come sooner or later. Moreover, this was the better time, as the colonists had military leaders who had been trained in the last war. The author closed with this appeal. "We ought to reflect that there are three different ways by which an independency can hereafter be effected; and that one of these three will one day or other be the fate of America, viz.: By the legal voice of the people in Congress, by a military power, or by a mob. Should an independence be brought about by the first of those means, we have every opportunity and every encouragement before us to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world over again. The birthday of a new world is at hand, and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom from the event of a few months. The reflection is awful, and in this point of view, how trifling, how ridiculous, do the little paltry cavillings of a few weak or interested men appear, when weighed against the business of a world." <sup>24</sup>

This pamphlet had a large sale and a great influence in preparing the minds of the people for the Declaration of Independence. The force of events, the needs of strong government, the military situation, and the march of ideas were forcing independence to the front. Many of the colonies were rent and divided between the claims of the opposing parties. New York was the centre of a fierce strife. Pennsylvania was divided between the party of conciliation and the leaders of the popular movement which weakened the forces of the colony throughout the war. In spite of the protests of the moderate party, the popular leaders finally had their way and called a convention of the people to decide the issue. The moderate party, however, redoubled its efforts to keep open the door for peace. They still held that the British ministry would propose reasonable terms and in Congress they were able to prevent any action. Against this policy of waiting for the British commissioners, Samuel Adams protested, saying, "Is not America already independent? Why not, then, declare it? Because, say some, it will forever shut the door of reconciliation. But Britain will not be reconciled, except upon our abjectly submitting to tyranny, and asking and receiving

<sup>24</sup> "Paine's Works," Vol. I, p. 50.

pardon for resisting it." And he pointed out that "no foreign power can consistently yield comfort to rebels, or enter into any kind of treaty with these colonies, till they declare themselves independent."

In the middle of February, Gadsden of South Carolina startled Congress by coming out boldly for a new constitution and absolute independence. This produced an acrimonious debate and one member heaped the coarsest abuse on the author of "Common Sense." Meanwhile things were drifting into confusion and the need of a stable government was beginning to be recognised. Finally, pressure was put upon Congress to act by the voice of the people in the different colonies. North Carolina led the way, and early in April instructed "its delegates in the Continental Congress to concur with the delegates of the other colonies in declaring independency and forming foreign alliances." The opinion of South Carolina was expressed by the chief justice at Charleston, who declared "the King of Great Britain had abdicated the government and had no authority over us, and we owe no obedience to him."

On May 4th, Rhode Island threw over its allegiance to the king and organised itself as a republic. Later in the month, John Adams proposed the following resolution in Congress: "That each one of the United Colonies, where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs had as yet been established, should adopt such government as would, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular and of America in general." This resolution was resisted and debated for two successive days and then won a signal triumph, and a committee of John Adams, Edward Rutledge, and Richard Henry Lee was appointed to draw up a preamble to the resolution. In their report they called attention to the Act of Parliament which excluded Americans from the protection of the crown, the king's neglect to return an answer to their petition, the employment of foreign mercenaries, and declared that it was "absolutely irreconcilable with reason and good conscience for the people of these colonies now to take the oaths and affirmations necessary for the support of any government under the crown of Great Britain, and that it was necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the crown should be totally suppressed, and all the powers of government exerted under the authority of the people of the colonies, for the preservation of their peace and their defence against their enemies." In spite of the opposition of

the party of conciliation, the preamble was adopted by a majority of the delegates in Congress. John Adams hailed this vote as settling the question of independence, exclaiming that "the Gordian knot is cut."<sup>25</sup>

During the time that this question was debated in Congress, Virginia led the way in the movement towards independence, by publishing its famous Bill of Rights. Its House of Burgesses met on May 6th and then dissolved and gave way to a convention, called with constituent and executive powers. Among the one hundred and thirty delegates to the convention were those from the county of Buckingham, who were instructed to advocate throwing off allegiance to Great Britain and establishing a constitution "with a full representation, and free and frequent elections"; that "a government may be established in America, the most free, happy, and permanent that human wisdom can contrive, and the perfection of man maintain."<sup>26</sup>

The first work of the convention was to instruct its delegates in Congress to declare the united colonies free and independent and then it appointed a committee of thirty-two to prepare a Declaration of Rights and a plan of government. On this committee were Archibald Cary, Patrick Henry, Richard Bland, Edmund Randolph, and the youthful James Madison. The Declaration of Rights which was presented laid the foundations of American liberty; formulated the principles of democracy; and became the basis of the Declaration of Independence. These principles were summed up in the following articles: "All men are by nature equally free, and have inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety. All power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people; magistrates are their trustees and servants, and at all times amenable to them.

"Government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit and security of the people, nation, or community; and whenever any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community hath an indubitable, inalienable, and indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such a manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.

<sup>25</sup> Bancroft, "History," Vol. VIII, p. 368.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.



"Public services not being descendible, neither ought the offices of magistrate, legislator, or judge to be hereditary.

"The legislative and executive powers of the state should be separate and distinct from the judicative; the members of the two first should, at fixed periods, return into that body from which they were originally taken, and the vacancies be supplied by the frequent, certain, and regular elections.

"Elections of members to serve as representatives of the people in assembly, ought to be free; and all men, having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to, the community, have the right of suffrage, and cannot be taxed or deprived of their property for public uses without their own consent or that of their representative so elected, nor bound by any law to which they have not, in like manner, assented for the public good." <sup>27</sup>

These political principles were derived from Locke and from the ideas of natural rights prevalent in the eighteenth century. It was Locke's interpretation of the principles underlying the Puritan Revolution and the Revolution of 1688 which had been accepted and adopted by the American colonists. Locke had laid down in his "Civil Government" the following principles: "The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one; and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind who will consult it, that, being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possession." <sup>28</sup>

"Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person; this nobody has any right to but himself." <sup>29</sup>

"Men being, as has been said, by nature all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent." <sup>30</sup>

"The supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his own consent. . . . Nobody hath a right to take their substance or any part of it from them, without their own consent; without this, they have no property at all." <sup>31</sup>

"The people alone can appoint the form of the commonwealth, which is by constituting the legislative, and appointing in whose hands that shall be. . . . The power of the legislative being derived from the people by a voluntary grant and institution, can

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 381-2.

<sup>28</sup> Locke, "Of Civil Government and Toleration," p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

be no other than what that positive grant conveyed, which being only to make laws, and not to make legislators, the legislative can have no power to transfer their authority of making laws and place it in other hands." <sup>32</sup>

The men of the colonial period were steeped in the ideas of Locke and it was from his teachings that the democratic leaders derived their principles of equality and the consent of the governed.

The effect of the action of Virginia was immediately felt in the session of Congress at Philadelphia. On June 7th, Richard Henry Lee proposed: "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; that it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming foreign alliances; and that a plan of confederation be prepared, and transmitted to the respective colonies for their consideration and approbation." <sup>33</sup>

This resolution was seconded by John Adams, and speaking on the question the next day, he declared that the proposed measures were "objects of the most stupendous magnitude, in which the lives and liberties of millions yet unborn were intimately interested"; and as the consummation "of a revolution, the most complete, unexpected, and remarkable, of any in the history of nations."

Congress debated the resolution for two days and then decided by a vote of seven colonies to five to delay taking any definite action until the delegates could consult their constituents; but in order to avoid any unnecessary delay, it appointed a committee to draw up a declaration in harmony with the resolution. This committee was elected by ballot and consisted of Jefferson, John Adams, Franklin, Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. As Jefferson received the highest vote, he acted as chairman and upon him devolved the task of writing the Declaration of Independence. He owed his appointment on the committee to his facility as a writer and to the leading part that he had taken in the struggle in Virginia. The original draft of the Declaration was submitted to Franklin and then to Adams. They made a few verbal changes and toned down some of the phrases, but in no way changed its vital principle. Jefferson's own account of

<sup>32</sup> Locke, "Of Civil Government and Toleration," p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. VIII, p. 389.

how he wrote it was brought out many years later when Adams and others had made some disparaging remarks concerning the document. Writing to Madison, he said: "Pickering's observations and Mr. Adams' in addition, 'that it contained no new ideas, that it is a common-place compilation, its sentiments hacknied in Congress for two years before, and its essence contained in Otis' pamphlet,' may all be true. Of that I am not to be the judge. Richard Henry Lee charged it as copied from Locke's treatise on government. Otis' pamphlet I never saw, and whether I had gathered my ideas from reading or reflection I do not know. I know only that I turned to neither book nor pamphlet while writing it. I did not consider it any part of my charge to invent new ideas altogether, and to offer no sentiment which had ever been expressed before.'" <sup>34</sup>

Speaking of its object, he wrote to Henry Lee in 1825, just before his death, "This was the object of the Declaration of Independence. Not to find out new principles, or new arguments, never before thought of, not merely to say things which had never been said before; but to place before mankind the common sense of the subject, in terms so plain and firm as to command their assent, and to justify ourselves in the independent stand we are compelled to take. Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular or previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit called for by the occasion. All its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day, whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or in the elementary books of public right, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc." <sup>35</sup>

From the day the Declaration of Independence was passed on July 4, 1776, it became the great Charter of Democracy and its principles became the basis of every people struggling against despotism. These principles were summed up in its opening sentences: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights; that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its

<sup>34</sup> Jefferson's Works, Vol. VII, p. 305.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness." <sup>36</sup>

The full significance and historic influence of the Declaration of Independence was probably not recognised by the delegates to the Continental Congress. They were too much concerned with the present crisis to give much thought to its ulterior ends and they adopted these principles of natural rights as the best means to oppose the tyranny of the king and the British Government. No doubt many of the delegates were far from accepting the inferences that might be drawn from its principles in favour of democracy. Later many of them deprecated that the exigencies of the Revolution compelled them to give expression to many of these ideas. At the same time, these principles embodied the ideas that had been for some years in the air and which thoughtful men had accepted as the basis of government. The Declaration of Independence brought these speculations of the philosophers down from the heights of thought into the arena of practical politics. It made them the foundation of a system of government and these ideas were stamped on the heart of the common man at a time when his mind had been raised to a white heat by the fires and passions of the Revolution. It proclaimed these principles to all the world as the basis of all government and stirred men anew to investigate the foundations of their political life. The effect upon some minds was electric. Lafayette said that, on reading the Declaration of Independence, he determined to sail for America and to enlist in the revolutionary cause. These ideas of liberty found many sympathisers among the thinkers of Europe and the struggle of the American Revolution was watched with intense interest by multitudes of men. It was recognised as a conflict not alone between the colonies and Great Britain, but also as a struggle for the principles of liberty, equality, and the right of the people to organise their own government; a struggle in which the forces of democracy were arrayed against the forces of autocracy and arbitrary government.

With the triumph of the American cause in 1783, many men abroad saw that a new era had begun for humanity and that democracy had commenced its march towards the dominion of the world. As the effect of this struggle was seen later to stir the political life of France and England, discerning men among the American leaders began to see a new and greater future for

<sup>36</sup> Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. VIII, p. 465.

democracy. "The appeal to the rights of man," said Jefferson, "which has been made in the United States, was taken up by France, first of European nations. From her, the spirit has spread over those of the South. The tyrants of the North have allied indeed against it; but it is irresistible."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. I, p. 106.

## CHAPTER II

### REACTION AGAINST DEMOCRACY: THE CONSTITUTION

THE principle of equality expressed in the Declaration of Independence had a marked effect upon the new state governments which were formed during the period of the Revolution. Under the enthusiasm of this new spirit the radical element controlled many of the conventions and succeeded in extending the principles of democracy. In accordance with a resolution passed in Congress in May, 1776, to the effect that "the respective assemblies and conventions of the united colonies, where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs hath been hitherto established, to adopt such government as shall, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular, and America in general," the colonial assemblies at once proceeded to call conventions of the people to form a constitution, or undertook the work themselves. In some states like Connecticut and Rhode Island, they simply threw off their allegiance to the king and continued their republican form of government under the royal charters with an elected governor. In others like Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Delaware, a convention was elected by the people which within a few months adopted a constitution. All the conventions accepted as a fundamental principle of the constitutions the sovereignty of the people, and they organised the legislature into two branches, an Assembly and a Senate with a governor or council. The second chamber was avowedly organised as the representative of the property-classes and its basis of eligibility and elective franchise were more limited than for that of the Assembly. Two states, Pennsylvania and Georgia, were exceptions to this rule and their constitutions allowed only a single Assembly elected annually by the people. In Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and partially in North Carolina the franchise was extended to all tax-paying residents and in Georgia, to any white inhabitant "being of any mechanic

trade," otherwise an elector must have a freehold to the value of ten pounds. In this idea of a single chamber, the convention of Pennsylvania was guided by the opinion of Franklin who held that it made the government more directly responsible to the people. This opinion was shared by Dr. Price in England and Turgot in France. The latter held that "it was a mistake to undertake to balance the different authorities in a republic, formed upon the equality of all the citizens."<sup>1</sup>

While none of the states adopted a franchise with universal suffrage, yet in some states it was so largely extended as to place the government upon the solid base of the mass of the people. At the same time, the full implications of the Declaration of Independence in its tendency towards democracy were not recognised in any of the constitutions. While in New England and Pennsylvania, these tendencies had the largest recognition, yet it was still held that some form of property was necessary for the franchise. Nevertheless the people were jealous of their rights and were imbued with the spirit of equality and democracy. In a marked degree, this spirit was seen in the attitude of the people of Massachusetts. They rejected the first constitution submitted to them by the Assembly in 1777 on the ground that it lacked a Bill of Rights and had not been made by a convention elected by the people. This rejection led to the calling of a Constitutional Convention, elected by the people, on September 1, 1779, and one of its first acts was to pass two resolutions: first, "That the government to be framed by this convention shall be a Free Republic; secondly, that it is the essence of a free republic, that the people be governed by *fixed laws of their own making*."<sup>2</sup>

The convention also appointed a committee of thirty to draft a constitution and a Bill of Rights and this work devolved upon a sub-committee of three, consisting of James Bowdoin, Samuel Adams, and John Adams. Upon the latter fell the duty of drawing up the draft of the Constitution which was adopted by the committee with a few verbal changes and endorsed substantially as written by the convention. John Adams has told us of the care that was exercised by his colleagues and himself in drawing this document and the principles which guided them in its construction. "There never was an example of such precautions as taken by this wise and jealous people in the formation of their government. None was ever made so perfectly upon the prin-

<sup>1</sup> John Adams, "Works," Vol. IV, p. 279. Letter of Turgot.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 215.

ciple of the people's rights and equality. It is Locke, Sidney, and Rousseau and De Mably, reduced to practice, in the first instance."<sup>3</sup>

The first chapter of the constitution consisted of a Bill of Rights with thirty-one articles. The first article in its principles dominates the whole, "All men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights, among which may be reckoned the right of enjoying and defending their lives and liberties; that of acquiring, possessing, and protecting property; in fine, that of seeking and obtaining their safety and happiness." As showing the democratic spirit of the convention the word "equal" was substituted for that of "independent" as found in the original draft. Two other articles showed the general drift of the thought of the convention: Article VII, which reads, "That government is instituted for the common good"; and Article XX which has a special significance in view of later developments in the history of the state: "The people have a right, in an orderly and peaceable manner, to assemble to consult upon the common good, give instructions to their representatives, and to request of the legislative body, by way of addresses, petitions, or remonstrances, redress of the wrongs done them, and the grievances they suffer."

The constitution, as finally passed by the convention, gave to the governor the suspensive veto, with a Senate and a House of Representatives, all elected annually by the people. The electors for senators were restricted to residents with a freehold estate with an annual income of three pounds or other real or personal property of the value of sixty pounds; and for the House of Representatives, the electors were on the same basis. In the original draft, Adams had desired to give the governor an absolute veto, but this was changed in the convention and the governor's veto might be set aside by a two-thirds vote of the Senate and the House. Massachusetts was the first state to give the governor the veto and the power to appoint the executive and judicial officers with the assent and the approval of the council. In other states, the governor could only act with the advice of an executive council appointed by the legislature. The Governor of Massachusetts was also made the commander-in-chief of the army and navy and was given the power of pardoning.

John Adams had always been an advocate of strong government and wished to guard against any excesses of the people and

<sup>3</sup> John Adams, "Works," Vol. IV. p. 216.



the tendency which he perceived in them towards license. In this opinion he seems to have encountered considerable opposition; for he writes in 1775, "I know that every one of my friends, and all those who were the most zealous for assuming governments, had at that time no idea of any other government but a contemptible legislature in one Assembly," <sup>4</sup> and he probably looked with little favour upon the new constitutions of Pennsylvania and Georgia.

Nevertheless the new constitution represented the opinion of the great mass of the people of Massachusetts owing to the equalisation of property which existed at that time. The Revolution had worked towards this equalisation; for many men of large property and education had sympathised with England and had been exiled from the state. "Probably the social system of New England more nearly approximated theoretical democracy in 1776 than that of any other colony then did, or than it has ever itself done since." <sup>5</sup>

At the treaty of peace in 1783, the state of public opinion gave rise to two distinct political movements which developed side by side for some years; the one moved in the direction of democracy and was marked by the spread of the spirit of equality and liberty, tending even towards anarchy; the other was characterised by its opposition to democracy and embraced the wealthier and upper classes in the community who were large holders of state and continental securities and therefore interested in the effort to meet the public debts. It was the antagonisms generated by the conflict of these two movements which occupied the states for the next six years, from 1783 to 1789, when the Federal Constitution was formed and the national government established. The underlying basis of this conflict was the essential differences in the interests of the debtor and creditor classes. And it was among the debtor class, consisting of the farmers, small freeholders and small tradesmen that the strength of the democratic movement was found. This democratic movement had been gathering strength during the course of the War of the Revolution and was accelerated after hostilities had ceased. Thousands of soldiers had returned to their homes filled with enthusiasm for liberty and imbued with the spirit of licence learned in the army. Under the depressed conditions of business, they could find no employment and were readily enlisted in any scheme which tended to better their conditions. The extent and prevalence of the

<sup>4</sup> John Adams, "Works," Vol. III, p. 22.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Francis Adams, "Works of John Adams," Vol. III, p. 88. Note.

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democratic spirit among the people was not realised until the new social and economic conditions resulting from the war brought out the temper of the people.

These conditions always follow in the wake of war, specially of one that had been accompanied with revolution. In spite of the new constitutions, the people had not had sufficient experience in their working to accept without protest the limitations which they appeared to place upon their new-won freedom. The crisis arose when the pressure of debt and taxation aroused the opposition of the people and threatened the stability of the government and led to the demand for legislation which struck at the credit of the state. A large number of people had been ruined by the war and were suffering from its after-effects. They were loud in their complaints and looked to the legislatures to mitigate these evils. This gave rise to the paper-money party who believed that the evils of the time could be relieved by the emission of paper money. The causes that gave rise to this party were many, but that of first importance was declining trade. In many states, business was languishing, and new importations were closing down domestic manufactures and throwing men out of employment. Owing to the restrictions on trade passed by the British Government both in England and in the West Indies, exports of food-stuffs and tobacco had almost ceased and new markets had not yet been opened. The whale-oil industry and fisheries from which New England had hitherto obtained much of its wealth had come to a standstill and the farmers had no markets for their products. The condition was aggravated by foreign importations which drained the states of their specie and made money scarce. These importations had been due to the rise of a new and powerful money class who had grown rich through the war by privateering and by supplying the needs of the army. This class was settled along the maritime coast and the sea-ports, and were indulging in all kinds of luxuries and extravagances.

The spirit of reckless expenditure soon invaded all classes of the community and many were induced to live beyond their means; with the consequence of being involved in debt. The burden of these debts created a spirit of discontent which was further increased by burdens of new taxation levied by the states to meet the interest on the consolidated foreign debt owing by the confederacy and by the need of raising money to meet the payments of five years given to the officers in place of a pension of half pay for life. To add to these grievances, the creditors of

the states were demanding their interest and suing their debtors in the courts and foreclosing their mortgages. This led to a multitude of private law-suits and the lawyers seemed to be prospering at the expense of the people. In one section of Massachusetts alone, there were 2000 cases on the calendar. Many of these creditors were speculators who had bought up the depreciated paper in which the soldiers and officers had been paid and were demanding that the states provide money to meet their obligations at their face value. To remedy these conditions was probably beyond the power of the legislatures and they could be relieved only by the return of trade and by rigid economy by the people. But such was not the common opinion. The people believed that the remedy lay in their legislatures, which could give relief by issuing paper money.

This led to a conflict between the interests of the debtors and creditors in nearly all the states. In Georgia, North Carolina, and Maryland the legislatures acceded to the demands of the people and issued paper money in various amounts, but it soon brought a depreciation and no permanent relief. In Rhode Island, the paper-money party completely captured the legislature, which issued paper money in such quantities as to disorganise all business, and capital threatened to leave the state. While this victory of the people brought temporary relief, yet in the end it led to the disorganisation of the government and destroyed the credit of the state with the other states. In Virginia and New York the cheap-money men were defeated and these states were saved from the evils which afflicted the other communities. But in Massachusetts, the agitation assumed alarming proportions and was typical of the spirit which disturbed the tranquillity of the common people throughout the confederacy. Before the agitation had died down, it developed into an insurrection, known as the Shays Rebellion, from a Captain Shays who became the leader of the movement. That the agitation assumed such a dangerous form was due to the more democratic character of the people and their greater independence. This feeling found expression many times during the war among the militia of the New England states. Moreover, Massachusetts had sent a larger number of men into the army than any other state and they had returned home with ideas of freedom and democracy which made them unwilling to submit to conditions which doomed them to unemployment, loss of their land, and imprisonment for debt. They complained that while they were fighting for freedom, others who stayed at home had profited by the war and were now taking

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advantage of their misfortunes and pushing them to the wall by their suits in the courts.

The opposition was largely centred in the western counties of the state, where the landed interests were strong and where they had felt the full effects of the declining trade and the loss of markets for their products. They looked with suspicion on all taxes levied to meet the interest on the state debts as well as upon all lawyers who were the instruments in pushing the claims of the creditors in the courts. The first signs of an insurrection began with a simple protest against the inferior courts and the lawyers, whom the farmers thought were the cause of all their misfortunes.

In the election of the House of Representatives in May, 1786, the idea was circulated of excluding all lawyers from the House and the cry was taken up that "the burdens which they laboured under were occasioned by the abuses of this profession." "The flame," says Minot, "pervaded the greatest part of the Commonwealth. The lawyers, in most instances, were excluded from the House of Representatives. . . . When the Assembly met, their zeal was kindled from the people. This was evidenced by their elections in filling up the vacancies in the Senate. Preference was given to some characters, which could not be accounted for on any other grounds than that of their fellow-candidates being practitioners of the law."<sup>6</sup> Legislation was carried in the interest of the people and a bill was passed reducing the exorbitant fees of attorneys and admitting "all persons of moral character into the practice of law." But this bill was sent up to the Senate which deferred its consideration and postponed its examination until the "next assembling."

The House did not prove as sympathetic with the popular party as had been expected; for it passed a grant of the supplementary funds to the United States and refused an application for the emission of paper money sent up from the county of Bristol. This proposal obtained only nineteen votes out of a House of 118 members. An effort made to divert the appropriation of the import and excise duties from being used to pay the interest on the consolidated notes, due on the foreign debt, also met with defeat and the legislature adjourned on the eighth of July to the thirty-first of January following. The failure of these measures was largely due to the opposition of the Senate, and a cry arose among the people for a revision of the constitution and the abolition of the Senate. To the cry against the lawyers was now

<sup>6</sup> Minot, "History of Insurrections in Massachusetts," p. 30. 1788.

added that of many other grievances. A convention was called by the people of fifty towns of Hampshire whose delegates met at Hatfield on August 22d. The proceedings of this convention were formulated in a series of articles in which was set forth the complaints of the people.

"The Convention from a thorough conviction of great uneasiness, subsisting among the people of this county and Commonwealth, then went into an inquiry for the cause: and, upon mature consideration, . . . that many grievances and unnecessary burdens now lying upon the people are the sources of that discontent so evidently discoverable throughout this Commonwealth. Among which the following articles were voted as such, viz.:

"1st. The existence of the Senate.

"2d. The present mode of representation.

"3d. The officers of government not being annually dependent on the representatives of the people, in General Court assembled, for their salaries.

"4th. All the civil officers of government, not being annually elected by the Representatives of the people, in General Court assembled.

"5th. The existence of the Courts of Common Pleas, and General Sessions of the Peace.

"6th. The Fee Table as it now stands.

"7th. The present mode of appropriating the impost and excise.

"8th. The unreasonable grants made to some of the officers of government.

"9th. The supplementary aid.

"10th. The present mode of paying the governmental securities.

"11th. The present mode adopted for the payment and speedy collection of the last tax.

"12th. The present mode of taxation as it operates unequally between the polls and estates, and between landed and mercantile interests.

"13th. The present method of practice of the attorneys at law.

"14th. The want of a sufficient medium of trade, to remedy the mischiefs arising from the scarcity of money.

"15th. The General Court sitting in the town of Boston.

"16th. The present embarrassments on the press.

"17th. The neglect of the settlement of important matters

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depending between the Commonwealth and Congress, relating to monies and averages.

"18th. Voted, This convention recommend to the several towns in this county, that they instruct their Representatives, to use their influence in the next General Court, to have emitted a bank of paper money, subject to a depreciation; making it a tender in all payments, equal to silver and gold, to be issued in order to call in the Commonwealth's securities. •

"19th. Voted, That whereas several of the above articles of grievances, arise from defects in the constitution; therefore a revision of the same ought to take place.

"20th. Voted, That it be recommended by this convention to the several towns in this county, that they petition the Governor to call the General Court immediately together, in order that the other grievances complained of, may by the legislature, be redressed.

"21st. Voted, That this convention recommend it to the inhabitants of this county, that they abstain from all mobs and unlawful assemblies, until a constitutional method of redress can be obtained." 7

The convention also voted to send a copy of their proceedings to the convention of Worcester and to the county of Berkshire to invite their co-operation. Had the people stopped with stating their complaints and kept within the constitutional method of redress by petition, the government would have been inclined to consider many of their complaints; but unfortunately a spirit of insurrection was already stirring among a section of the people and the action of the convention, far from allaying this feeling, only served to inflame it. At the end of August, 1500 men assembled under arms at Northampton and took possession of the courthouse and prevented the session of the court. The governor issued a proclamation calling the attention of the people to their treasonable conduct, but without any effect. The distrust of the legislature was too strong and the flame of insurrection spread to the counties of Worcester, Middlesex, Bristol, and Berkshire. At Worcester a body of 300 insurgents prevented the holding of the court and it was forced to adjourn to November 21st. •

As many of the militia in these counties were in sympathy with the insurgents, the authorities were powerless. In the Berkshires the same spirit of lawlessness was shown and a mob

<sup>7</sup> Minot, *op.*, 33.

at Great Barrington prevented the sitting of the court and broke open the jail and liberated the prisoners. Under these circumstances, the governor called a meeting of the General Court on September 27th and took measures to call out the militia to restore order. While the Senate supported the governor in his vigorous measures and approved his plans for calling out the militia and suggested suspending the habeas corpus, yet they were opposed by a strong party in the House, who deprecated any extreme measures until the legislature had first given attention to redressing the complaints of the people. "In pursuance of the idea of quieting the uneasiness of the people, the House of Representatives went on to vote, that they would remove the General Court out of the town of Boston, if it could be done with advantage to the publick; and appointed a committee, consisting of a member from each county, to report a more suitable place at their next sitting. They also took up much time in debating upon the best mode of appropriating the proceeds of the impost and excise duties; one party contending in favour of the old one, and others aiming to defray, with those duties, the interest of the foreign loans, and the exigencies of the government." <sup>s</sup>

This attitude of the House alarmed many people, who thought that the time had come for employing forcible measures against the insurgents, and they feared the effects of the action of the House in holding up the measure for the suspension of the habeas corpus and now desired that the House might adjourn before more harm was done.

This leniency on the part of the authorities had only emboldened the leaders of the insurgents, and fearing the effects of the possible suspension of the habeas corpus, they called their followers to arms. Under cover of the complaints of the people, they had designs to overturn the constitution and the government. On October 23d, Daniel Shays issued a letter to the insurgents in which he said, "By information from the General Court, they are determined to call all those who appeared to stop the Court, to condign punishment. Therefore, I request you to assemble your men together, to see that they are well armed and equipped, with sixty rounds each man, and to be ready to turn out at a minute's warning; likewise to be properly organised with officers." <sup>s</sup>

This letter at once brought matters to an issue, and the House

<sup>s</sup> Minot, p. 60.

<sup>s</sup> Holland, "History of Western Massachusetts," p. 250.

of Representatives voted to stand behind the governor in all his measures to put down the rebellion in the commonwealth and voted the suspension of the habeas corpus. At the same time, in order to separate the mass of the people from the insurgents, they issued an address to the people and passed an indemnity act for all those who should take the oath of allegiance by the first day of January. In this address to the people, they took up the grounds of the public complaints and published a detailed statement of the expenses of the government. As to the demand for a new constitution, they said, "An attempt to form the present constitution was begun in the year 1777, and was not completed until the year 1780; the cost and trouble attending it, we all remember, were exceeding great, and perhaps nothing would finally have been agreed to, if an unusual spirit of mutual condescension had not prevailed; a sense of common danger from abroad produced internal harmony and union: but what hope could we now have of that mutual compliance, which would be necessary to agree upon a form of government, when the tempers of so many are in a state of irritation? Should the present government be overthrown, a state of general confusion would ensue; and after we had experienced all the horrors of anarchy, and the effects of unrestrained violence and revenge, our dear earned freedom would probably be swallowed up by domestic despotism or foreign dominion.

"The constitution is as free and popular as the preservation of society will admit; and indeed some have feared, it is more so: it has been highly applauded by foreigners and approved by the people: all persons employed in the legislative or executive parts of government depend annually upon the people for their choice; if the people are dissatisfied with their conduct, they have the opportunity yearly to appoint others, in whom they can more fully confide. Can there be any necessity, then, of resorting to irregular, or violent measures, to obtain redress of grievances?"<sup>10</sup>

As to the complaints of the taxes, it was pointed out that two-thirds were levied on estates and that the poll-tax which fell upon 94,000 electors averaged sixteen pence each.

Governor Bowdoin now took vigorous measures after the first of January to put down the insurrection and called out 4500 men of the militia and put them under the command of General Lincoln. He marched to Springfield to attack the insurgents who had assembled under Shays and Luke to seize the United States arsenal. It was defended by General Shepard with a few hundred

<sup>10</sup> "Address of General Court," October 27, 1786, p. 28:



troops. The insurgents moved to the attack and, being fired upon with cannon, immediately broke and fled, crying out, "murder." Shays was unable to rally his force and with depleted ranks withdrew to Pelham on the approach of General Lincoln, who pursued the insurgents and captured large numbers. The rest withdrew to Vermont and to Canada. In the Berkshires there were a few skirmishes between the insurgents and the troops and finally resistance was put down at all points. More than 800 insurgents were indicted and fined and 16 were sentenced to death.

At the elections in May, Hancock was elected governor and the majority of the new House of Representatives were found to be in sympathy with the insurgents and revealed that the discontent had pervaded a large part of the state. While this led to a desire to remove many of the causes of complaint by the people, yet it did not diminish the determination of the government to stamp out all traces of the rebellion. Now that most of the insurgents had returned to their allegiance, there was a disposition to deal leniently with the offenders. Those condemned to death were reprieved in July and on the twelfth of September, when quiet and tranquillity had been restored, a general pardon was issued. In consequence of this, the rebellion left behind few traces of bitterness or of the spirit of revenge which might have disturbed the state in years to come. The moderation displayed by the government was justified by the results. It had upheld its authority, but had refrained from resorting to extreme measures of repression. The quiet and order that ensued later in the commonwealth were a tribute to the orderliness of the people and condemned the attack upon democracy by a certain section of the community. Nevertheless the Shays Rebellion made a profound impression upon the country and produced a strong reaction against democracy. Washington was amazed when he heard of the fact and could not understand how men were ready to rebel against a government of their own choice. He had written to General Knox, "I feel infinitely more than I can express to you, for the disorders, which have arisen in these States. Good God! Who, besides a Tory, could have foreseen, or a Briton predicted them? I do assure you, that even at this moment, when I reflect upon the present prospect of our affairs, it seems to me to be like the vision of a dream. My mind can scarcely realise it as a thing in actual existence; so strange, so wonderful does it appear to me. In this, as in most other matters, we are too slow. There are combustibles in every State, to which a spark might set fire. In this a perfect calm

prevails at present, and a prompt disposition to support and give energy to the federal system is discovered."<sup>11</sup>

This disposition received an increased impetus among men of property through the disturbances in Massachusetts. On the one hand it had alarmed the advocates of republican principles throughout the nation and stimulated the desire for a strong national government; on the other, it had given rise to a strong party who rejoiced at the mistakes of democracy and held that it justified them in advocating a monarchical government. Madison held that the insurrection in Massachusetts was the largest influence in creating opinion in favour of the Federal Convention. "It was found," he said, "that those least partial to popular government, or most distrustful of its efficacy, were yielding to anticipations, that, from an increase of the confusion, a government might result more congenial with their tastes or their opinions; whilst those most devoted to the principles and forms of republics were alarmed for the cause of liberty itself, at stake in the American experiment, and anxious for a system that would avoid the inefficacy of a mere confederacy, without passing into the opposite extreme of a consolidated government."<sup>12</sup>

The insurrection had worked a revolution of opinion among the leading men in the New England States and it was said that the strongest supporters in favour of monarchy were to be found in those states. Before this event there had been little inclination to support a Federal Convention. The members from New England had refused to send delegates to the Convention called at Annapolis in September, 1786, and it had only been attended by delegates from the Middle States; then the meeting had been adjourned and a new Convention was called by Congress to meet at Philadelphia in May, 1787, to revise the Articles of the Confederation. In the meantime the Shays Rebellion had occurred and now opinion was running even more strongly in favour of a strong government as necessary to check the tendencies towards separation and anarchy. It was during the close of the rebellion that the delegates were selected for the Convention and in order to avoid an appeal to the people and to secure men of outstanding ability, they were elected by the state legislatures. They represented the distinguished men of the nation and belonged almost entirely to the large owners of property, to the holders of government securities, advocates of monarchy, and the conservative forces of the states.

<sup>11</sup> "Writings of Washington," Vol. IX, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> Madison, "Secret Debates," p. 120.

Democracy was not represented, and Jefferson, who had always been a champion of the people, was absent in Europe. This composition of the delegates to the Federal Convention gave a peculiar colour to all its proceedings which were characterised by a marked antagonism to democracy which stamped itself upon many features of the Constitution. That these men were alarmed by the tendencies of the democratic spirit is everywhere revealed in the secret debates of the Convention. However great might be the differences which divided the delegates on the great questions of state rights and slavery, they were at one in their determination to form a government which would restrain and hold in check what they called the vicious tendencies of democracy. There were a few men, like Wilson and Franklin of Pennsylvania, and Mason and Madison of Virginia, who stood up for the rights of the people, but the dominant opinion expressed a mistrust of the people and a fear of the democracy. The advocates of a monarchical form of government were only a few, but they were among some of the strongest men in the Convention. However, it was recognised by all that the only government that would win acceptance by the people was a republic and that the national legislature must rest upon the broad base of the people, and that the people's representatives must be so restricted and limited by the other forms of the government as to check any danger from the democracy.

The Convention was called to meet at Philadelphia on May 12, 1787, but owing to the delay in assembling the delegates it did not open until the 26th. The first few days were spent in organising the Convention, at which Washington was elected President. And it was decided that the debates should be secret in order to prevent public agitation outside and to allow absolute freedom of discussion within. On the twenty-eighth of May, Edmund Randolph of Virginia presented an outline of a Constitution which became known as the Virginia plan. In the opening discussion on the election of the national legislature by the people, the opposition to democracy at once developed. Sherman of Connecticut immediately arose and proposed that election be by the state legislatures, saying that "the people, immediately, should have as little to do as may be about the government. They want information and are constantly liable to be misled."<sup>13</sup> While Gerry of Massachusetts was more emphatic in his opposition, stating, "The evils we experience flow from the excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue, but are the dupes

<sup>13</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 135.

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of pretended patriots. In Massachusetts, it had been fully confirmed by experience, that they are daily misled into the most baneful measures and opinions, by the false reports circulated by designing men, and which no one on the spot can refute. It would seem to be a maxim of democracy to starve the public servants. He mentioned the popular clamour in Massachusetts for the reduction of salaries, and the attack made on that of the governor, though secured by the spirit of the constitution itself. He had been too republican heretofore; he was still, however, republican, but had been taught by experience the danger of the levelling spirit."<sup>14</sup>

Mason argued strongly for the election of the larger branch by the people, but he admitted that "we had been too democratic, but was afraid we should incautiously run into the opposite extreme." And he pleaded for the rights of the people, saying, "We ought to attend to the rights of every class of the people. He had often wondered at the indifference of the superior classes of society to this dictate of humanity and policy; considering that, however affluent their circumstances, or elevated their situations, might be, the course of a few years not only might, but certainly would, distribute their posterity throughout the lowest classes of society. Every selfish motive, therefore, every family attachment, ought to recommend such a system of policy as would provide no less carefully for the rights and happiness of the lowest, than of the highest, order of citizens."<sup>15</sup> Wilson of Pennsylvania argued on the same lines and held that the federal pyramid should rest on as broad a basis as possible. "No government," he said, "could long subsist without the confidence of the people. In a republican government, this confidence was peculiarly essential." And it was "wrong to increase the weight of the state legislatures by making them the electors of the national legislature."<sup>16</sup>

Madison was also in favour of popular elections, but he "was an advocate for the policy of refining the popular appointments by successive filtrations, but thought it might be pushed too far. He wished the expedient to be resorted to only in the appointment of the second branch of the legislature, and in the executive and judiciary branches of the government."<sup>17</sup> Butler of South Carolina held that an election by the people was impracticable; and in this he was supported by other delegates.

<sup>14</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 135.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

When the question came up again in June, the objections to an election of the national legislature by the people were even stronger. Pinckney of South Carolina advocated an election by the state legislatures, contending "that the people were less fit judges in such a case."<sup>18</sup> And Rutledge agreed with him in this opinion. Gerry returned to the charge again and pointed out the evil effects of popular elections in Massachusetts. He said, "Several members of that body had lately been convicted of infamous crimes. Men of indigence, ignorance, and baseness spare no pains, however dirty, to carry their point against men who are superior to the artifices practised. He was not disposed to run into extremes. He was as much principled as ever against aristocracy and monarchy." And while he recognised the necessity of having the first branch appointed by the people so as to inspire confidence, he wished the people only to have the right to nominate certain persons, out of whom the state legislatures should make the appointment.<sup>19</sup>

Later in the month, when Pinckney moved that "the first branch, instead of being elected by the people, should be elected in such manner as the legislature of each state should direct," it produced an animated discussion during which the whole democratic position was restated. Mason was for retaining election by the people, adding that "whatever inconvenience may attend the democratic principle, it must actuate one part of the government. It is the only security for the rights of the people." Sherman and Rutledge spoke in opposition and supported elections by state legislatures. This brought forth the statement by Wilson that the election by the people of the first branch was "not only the corner-stone, but the foundation, of the fabric; and that the difference between a mediate and an immediate election was immense. The difference was particularly worthy of notice in this respect—that the legislatures are actuated not merely by the sentiment of the people, but have an official sentiment opposed to that of the general government, and perhaps to that of the people themselves."<sup>20</sup> The result of the debate ended in the defeat of General Pinckney's motion by six states to four. And it was finally decided by a majority of nine to one. It was clearly recognised that in the present temper of the people and the general prevalence of democratic ideas, that the Constitution would have no chance of being accepted by the people, unless

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

they were represented, at least, directly in the first branch of the government.

When it came to the question of the organisation of the Senate, the opposition to democracy was more pronounced and it was plainly stated that it was organised as a means of restraining the vagaries of democracy. Randolph stated that the general object was "to provide a cure for the evils under which the United States laboured; that, in tracing these evils to their origin, every man had found it in the turbulence and follies of democracy; that some check therefore was to be sought for against this tendency of our governments; and that a good Senate seemed most likely to answer the purpose."<sup>21</sup>

In this idea he expressed the general opinion of the Convention. Wilson suggested that the Senate be elected by the people, but he found few to support his opinion. Madison stated baldly that the purpose of the Senate was to protect the interests of property and to restrain the people without property who later would form a large proportion of the nation. The Senate was to be a defence against the danger of fickleness and passion of the people and "it ought to occur to a people deliberating on government for themselves, that, as different interests necessarily result from the liberty meant to be secured, the major interest might, under sudden impulses, be tempted to commit injustice on the minority. In all civilised countries the people fall into different classes, having a real or supposed difference of interests. There will be creditors and debtors; farmers, merchants, and manufacturers. There will be, particularly, the distinction of rich and poor. . . . An increase of population will of necessity increase the proportion of those who will labour under the hardships of life, and secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of its blessings. These may in time outnumber those who are placed above the feelings of indigence. According to the equal laws of suffrage, the power will slide into the hands of the former. No agrarian attempts have yet been made in this country; but symptoms of a levelling spirit, as we have understood, have sufficiently appeared, in a certain quarter, to give notice of the future danger. How is this danger to be guarded against, on the republican principles; how is the danger, in all cases of interested coalitions, to oppress the minority, to be guarded against? Among other means, by the establishment of a body, in the government, sufficiently respectable for its wisdom, and virtue to aid, on such emergencies, the preponderance of justice, by throwing its weight into that scale. Such being

<sup>21</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 138.

the objects of the second branch in the proposed government, he thought a considerable duration ought to be given to it." <sup>22</sup>

He then advocated that the senators be elected for nine years. In the discussion as to the mode and election of the Senate, great differences arose which developed into the struggle between the state rights and the national party which nearly destroyed the Convention. In the interests of equality of voting in the Senate by states, Patterson of New Jersey introduced his plan which involved merely revising the articles of the Confederation and leaving the power with the states. The larger states like Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Virginia advocated proportional representation as the only just basis of election, but were opposed by all the smaller states. The controversy became so bitter at the end of June that Franklin proposed that they introduce a chaplain to conduct morning prayers to quiet the passions of the delegates, but this was opposed as tending to reveal to the outside public the differences which existed in the Assembly. The issue was finally settled by a compromise by which each state should be represented by two members, irrespective of its population. And this was only achieved by a union of the slave and the New England states, the latter agreeing to allow the slave states to be represented on the basis of their slave population, counting as three-fifths. These two issues produced violent debates in the Convention, but in the course of the discussion, democracy came in for its full share of denunciation.

Dickinson of Delaware wished the "Senate to consist of the most distinguished characters, distinguished for their rank in life and their weight of property, and bearing as strong a likeness to the British House of Lords as possible; and he thought such characters more likely to be selected by the state legislatures than in any other mode." <sup>23</sup>

The various proposals were summed up by Gerry when he said, "Four modes of appointing the Senate have been mentioned. First, by the first branch of the national legislature. This would create a dependence contrary to the end proposed. Secondly, by the national executive. This is a stride towards monarchy that few will think of. Thirdly, by the people. The people have two great interests, the landed interest and the commercial, including the stockholders. To draw both branches from the people will leave no security to the latter interest; the people being chiefly composed of the landed interest, and erroneously supposing that

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 242-3.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 166.

the other interests are adverse to it. Fourthly, by the individual legislatures. The election, being carried through this refinement, will be most likely to provide some check in favour of the commercial interest against the landed, without which oppression will take place; and no free government can last long where that is the case. He was therefore in favour of this last." <sup>24</sup>

In this presentation, Gerry brought forward the dominance of the economic interests in the organisation of the Senate and the determination of the property classes to intrench themselves in the Senate. Bedford of Delaware, who represented the smaller states, boldly stated that it was the conflict of interests which divided the Convention and they should be recognised in the bargaining between the states. He said, "If political societies possess ambition, avarice, and all the other passions which render them formidable to each other, ought we not to view them in this light here? Will not the same motives operate in America as elsewhere? If any gentleman doubts it, let him look at the votes. Have they not been dictated by interest, by ambition? Are not the large states evidently seeking to aggrandize themselves at the expense of the small? They think, no doubt, that they have right on their side, but interest had blinded their eyes." <sup>25</sup>

Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania, who did not join the Convention until the end of June, was outspoken in his opposition to an equality of votes by the states in the Senate and entered into a lengthy discussion of its object and urged in the interest of security that the senators be appointed for life. He said, "What is this object? To check the precipitation, changeableness, and excesses of the first branch. Every man of observation had seen in the democratic branches of the state legislatures, precipitation; in Congress, changeableness; in every department, excesses against liberty, private property, and personal safety. What qualities are necessary to constitute a check in this case? *Abilities* and *virtue* are equally necessary in both branches. Something more, then, is now wanted. In the first place, the checking branch must have a personal interest in checking the other branch. One interest must be opposed to another interest. In the second place, it must have great personal property; it must have the aristocratic spirit; it must love to lord it through pride. Pride is, indeed, the great principle that actuates both the poor and the rich. It is this principle which in the former resists, in the latter abuses, authority. In the third place, it

<sup>24</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.



should be independent. The aristocratic body should be as independent, and as firm, as the democratic. If the members of it are to revert to a dependence on the democratic choice, the democratic scale will preponderate. All the guards contrived by America have not restrained the senatorial branches of the legislatures from a servile complaisance to the democratic. If the second branch is to be dependent, we are better without it. To make it independent, it should be for life. It will then do wrong, it will be said. He believed so; he hoped so. The rich will strive to establish their dominion, and enslave the rest! They always did; they always will. The proper security against them is to form them into a separate interest. By thus combining, and setting apart, the aristocratic interest, the popular interest will be combined against it. There will be a mutual check and mutual security." <sup>26</sup>

In this statement, Morris was taking the position of Hamilton, who had presented his plan for a monarchical form of government on June 18th when the dissensions in the Convention gave some hope that the delegates might turn to consideration of his scheme. Hamilton, who up to this time had taken no part in the discussion, began his remarks with the statement that he was unfriendly to both the Virginia and New Jersey plans and that he almost despaired that a republican government could be established over so large an extent of country. He avowed his admiration for the British form of government and "he doubted much whether anything short of it would do in America." He observed, "that the members most tenacious of republicanism, were as loud as any in declaiming against the vices of democracy. This progress of the public mind led him to anticipate the time, when others as well as himself would join in the praise bestowed by Mr. Necker on the British constitution; namely, that it is the only government in the world 'which unites public strength with individual security.' In every community where industry is encouraged, there will be a division of it into the few and the many. Hence, separate interests will arise. There will be debtors and creditors. Give all power to the many, they will oppress the few. Give all power to the few, they will oppress the many. Both, therefore, ought to have the power, that each may defend itself against the other. To the want of this check, we owe our paper money, installment laws. To the proper adjustment of it, the British owe the excellence of their constitution. Their House of Lords is a most noble institution. Having noth-

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 270.

ing to hope for by a change, and a sufficient interest, by means of their property, in being faithful to the national interest, they form a permanent barrier against every pernicious innovation, whether attempted on the part of the crown or of the commons. No temporary Senate will have firmness enough to answer the purpose. Gentlemen differ in their opinions concerning the necessary checks, from the different estimates they form of the human passions. They suppose seven years a sufficient period to give the Senate an adequate firmness, from not duly considering the amazing violence and turbulence of the democratic spirit. "When a great object of government is pursued, which seizes the popular passions, they spread like wild-fire and become irresistible. He appealed to the gentlemen from the New England States, whether experience had not there verified the remark. As to the executive, it seemed to be admitted that no good one could be established on republican principles." He presented a plan in which the senators would be elected to serve during good behaviour and an executive to be elected and serve on the same basis. This was to establish an executive, and senators for life; and he said that "he saw the union dissolving and evils operating which would soon cure the people of their fondness for democracies." 27

Hamilton had a dim vision of the irresistible progress of democracy and he wished to check it before it was too late by a government strong enough to destroy all popular movements. Hamilton left the Convention shortly after he had presented his plan and did not return until near its close and then he threw his influence towards strengthening the forces against democracy. His plan made some converts and his ideas came to the front at different periods during the remainder of the session. It is possible that his ideas might have commanded a larger following, had it not been for the strong party in favour of the rights of the states and their devotion to the state governments. The interests of property were dominant in the Convention, and little consideration was given to the fact of personal rights.

When it came to the question of the executive there was much diversity of opinion. The first proposition was that the executive should be elected by the national legislature for a term of years and be ineligible thereafter. Pinckney seconded the Wilson motion for a single executive and was supported by Rutledge, though he would not confer upon him the powers of war or peace. Sherman urged that the executive be appointed by, and

<sup>27</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 203.

accountable to, the legislature only, which was the depository of the supreme will of the society. Randolph was opposed to a single executive as the "foetus of monarchy" and advocated that the executive department be lodged in three persons as "the permanent temper of the people was adverse to the very semblance of monarchy." The question was finally decided for a single executive and now the debate centred around the question of his manner of election, the duration of his office, and his ineligibility.

At first it was decided he be elected by the national legislature for seven years and be ineligible. Then it was proposed that the executive be elected by the people. This was the suggestion of Wilson and Morris, but as Morris was known for his aristocratic views, it was received with suspicion, and Gerry and Mason, differing, as they did, radically in their views, intimated that a popular election would throw the election into the hands of the Society of the Cincinnati. Gerry, with his exaggerated fears of democracy, advocated that the executive be elected by the state executives. "The people of the states," he said, "will then choose the first branch, the legislatures of the states the second branch, of the national legislature; and the executives of the states the national executive. This would form a strong attachment in the states to the national system. The popular mode of electing the chief magistrate would certainly be the worst of all. If he should be so elected and should do his duty, he will be turned out for it, like Governor Bowdoin in Massachusetts, and President Sullivan in New Hampshire."<sup>28</sup>

Madison thought that the election by the people was best, but impracticable owing to the fact that the right of suffrage was much more diffused in the Northern States and would lead them to determine the election. He therefore advocated election of the executive by electors from each state. Owing to the diversity of opinions among the delegates, it was not until nearly the end of the session that this question was decided. While on the issue of ineligibility, there was the same disagreement and more than once the question was decided, and then brought up again in the Convention. Mason, after having outlined the various suggestions as to the election of the executive, gave this as his opinion against eligibility: "Having for his primary object—for the polar star of his political conduct—the preservation of the rights of the people, he held it as the essential point, as the very palladium of civil liberty, that the great officers of state, and particularly, the executive, should at fixed periods return to the mass

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

from which they were at first taken, in order that they may feel and respect those rights and interests which are again to be personally valuable to them," he moved that the "executive be appointed for seven years, and to be ineligible a second time." This was passed by the Convention by seven states to three.

The issue of the ratio of the number of inhabitants to each representative in the national legislature, raised another debatable question which strongly brought out the views on the meaning of the Constitution. Rutledge proposed that the proportion of suffrage be decided by the quotas of contribution, and Butler of South Carolina urged the same view, adding, "that money is power; and that the states ought to have weight in the government in proportion to their wealth."<sup>29</sup>

In discussing the possible admission of new Western States, this idea was brought out again, and Rutledge expressed the general opinion when he said, "Property was certainly the principal object of society." Gouverneur Morris went so far as to say, "Life and liberty were generally said to be of more value than property. An accurate view of the matter would, nevertheless, prove that property was the main object of society."<sup>30</sup> And he was opposed to the election of the representatives on the basis of one to every forty thousand inhabitants, and that ultimately it would lead to a transfer of political power from the maritime to the landed interest. Wilson rose in protest against this view, saying, he could not agree "that property was the sole or primary object of government and society. The cultivation and improvement of the human mind was the most noble object. With respect to this object, as well as to other *personal* rights, numbers were surely the natural and precise measure of representation."<sup>31</sup>

When it was proposed to limit the franchise to freeholders, which would have disfranchised many in the towns and the eldest sons of the farmers, Franklin said "it is of great consequence that we should not depress the virtue and public spirit of our common people; of which they displayed a great deal during the war, and which contributed principally to the favorable issue of it." He questioned "the right of narrowing the privileges of the electors" and "it would give rise to great uneasiness in the populous states."<sup>32</sup>

When Pinckney and others proposed that a property qualifica-

<sup>29</sup> Madison, "Debates on the Constitution," p. 178.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

tion should be established for members to the national legislature, Franklin again protested, saying that he must "express his dislike to everything that tended to debase the spirit of the common people. If honesty was often the companion of wealth, and if poverty was exposed to peculiar temptation, it was not less true that the possession of property increased the desire for more property. . . . This Constitution will be much read and attended to in Europe; and, if it should betray a great partiality to the rich, will not only hurt us in the esteem of the most liberal and enlightened men there, but discourage the common people from removing to this country."<sup>33</sup>

The protest of Franklin carried great weight with the Convention and the obnoxious article was rejected. On the whole the common sense of the Convention predominated over many of the special interests and the House of Representatives was firmly fixed upon the broad basis of the people. It was recognised that anything less than this would imperil the acceptance of the Constitution by the people which the Convention had decided after long and frequent debates should be submitted to them by conventions called in each state. Those who were opposed to democracy would have submitted the Constitution only to the legislatures of the states; but it was felt that such a procedure would encounter strong opposition from the State Rights party.

The powers and mode of election of the executive gave the Convention most concern and occupied its attention during the first part of September. The earlier decision for an executive, elected by the national legislature for a term of seven years and ineligible to re-election, appeared to the delegates far from satisfactory. A special committee was appointed to reconsider the whole question and to bring in a report with a better plan. It finally reported that the President be elected for four years and eligible for re-election; that his election should be by electors chosen by the states in proportion to the number of their senators and representatives in Congress and that these electors should vote for two names and that the one receiving the majority of votes should be President. If there was no majority, the Senate should choose one from the five highest candidates. This was objected to on the ground that it would throw the election into the hands of the Senate and make the President dependent upon this body. It was also contended that it would tend to the formation of a monarchy and aristocracy. After a prolonged debate it was finally decided that, in case of no election, the

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

House of Representatives should decide the election, each state having one vote. This removed the objection to an aristocracy which was dreaded by many delegates in the Convention. At the same time, the mode of election, while more democratic than that of election by the national legislature and conserving the independence of the executive, still placed the election at one remove from the people; for the people had no voice in naming the President, but only voted for the electors who had the right to vote at their discretion for the man of their choice.

Though the Constitution recognised the democratic principle in presenting it for the sanction by the people in conventions elected by the people of the states and laid emphasis on this fact by its opening words, "We the People of the United States," in reality it limited the influence of the people to the House of Representatives after the Constitution had once been adopted. In the contests of the state conventions on the Constitution, the opposition was largely due to the advocates of States Rights and to the politicians who regretted that their powers would be limited by the restrictions of the national government. The chief objections to the Constitution were that it contained no Bill of Rights and it was only adopted by Massachusetts and Virginia on the distinct understanding that this defect would be rectified at the first session of Congress. Little attention was given to the anti-democratic elements in the Constitution; for the people's control of the lower house seemed to prevent the passing of any legislation, opposed to their interests.

The Constitution was not a democratic document and was not intended to be such by its authors. Nevertheless it was a great instrument of government, and all the praise that has been bestowed upon it has been justified by experience of its working. Its principles of government were laid upon a broader basis than its authors realised. It met perfectly the demand for a strong central government which welded the states into a nation and gave to the United States Government a standing before the nations of the world. Its strength lay in the fact that it was a compromise between two great principles—federalism and nationalism. It did not, however, absorb the rights of the self-governing states and mould the people at once into a national unity. The powers of the national government were limited by the powers of the states in all that concerned local questions. In matters of general concern, in providing for national security and defence, in questions of trade and commerce, in foreign relations, on the issue of money and credit, and in the payment of

the national debt, the Constitution furnished adequate power to give effectiveness to these national interests. But on the questions of the extent of the franchise, the modes of elections, the internal questions of state governments, it left each state to develop according to the genius of the people and to the local issues growing out of the differences of territory and population. In all that pertained to local democracy and its development, the people were sovereign within their own states. As democracy developed, it stamped its spirit on its representatives in Congress, and even its senators, though removed by their election by the state legislatures from the direct action of the people, could not wholly escape the influence of their local environment and the spirit of the people in their respective states.

Nevertheless the Constitution achieved the two great purposes of its authors: first, to form a strong national government; and secondly, to give security to property and to restrain democracy from exerting an undue influence upon the government. In the organisation of the Senate, in the formation of the judiciary, in the creation of the powers of the President and his mode of election, and in the article on contracts, the Constitution limited and restrained the influence and power of democracy. Its one distinctive democratic feature, the House of Representatives, with its power of originating money bills in which the Senate could only concur and amend, placed the government upon the broad base of the people and introduced the democratic element which would allow the expansion of this principle as democracy developed. Before the Constitution left the Federal Convention to be submitted to the people, grave doubts were expressed as to its defects from the point of view of republican ideals of government. Hamilton said that he was willing to try it as an experiment in republican government, though he was in favour of a stronger government. While Randolph refused to sign the Constitution because he felt that it was a departure from republican principles, and Mason also refused on similar grounds. Franklin best expressed the general view when he said, "The Constitution contained two principles, a principle of monarchy and a principle of democracy." Whether it would develop in a monarchical or democratical direction would depend upon the views of the men who were elected to the House of Representatives. In the beginning, the forces which aimed at a consolidated government and tended towards the monarchical idea were largely in control and organised the federal government along national lines. But under the moderating influence of Washington, these forces were held in

control and the government was kept within the limits of the Constitution. When Washington retired from office, then the ideas of a consolidated government obtained full sway and its opposition to democracy became more manifest. The check upon these tendencies was to be found in the people of the states and their governments. And it was within the states that democracy naturally developed, attaining such momentum that it finally invaded the national government. These tendencies were born in the agitation of the state conventions, called to pass upon the Constitution. And though the Anti-Federalists were defeated under the pressure of the need for a national government and the necessity of national security, they formed a strong and aggressive party devoted to the government of the states and to the principles of democracy. The course pursued by the Federalists aroused the forces of democracy in the states until it finally succeeded in securing the government and changing the character of the administration. The history of this struggle of democracy to attain power forms one of the most interesting episodes in the development of American democracy and brings Jefferson on the stage as its leader and organiser.



## CHAPTER III

### ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEFFERSONIAN DEMOCRACY: FRENCH REVOLUTION

THE victory of the Federalists in the state conventions, the adoption of the Constitution and the establishment of the new government under the presidency of Washington still further served to increase the reaction against democracy. Those who were in favour of monarchy and those who believed in a strong government coalesced in the determination to organise the government along national lines so far as the spirit of the Constitution would allow. In the enthusiasm which had been aroused in the Federalists by the debates over the Constitution, their leaders hoped that the monarchical elements in the Constitution would be strengthened and enlarged. At the close of the federal convention, Knox wrote to Washington, "Although I frankly confess that the existence of the State Governments is an insuperable evil in a national point of view, yet I do not well see how, in this stage of the business, they could be annihilated; and, perhaps, while they continue, the frame of Government could not, with propriety, be much higher toned than the one proposed. . . . I am satisfied with the result of the Convention, although it is short of my wishes and of my judgment. But, when I find men of the purest intentions concur in embracing a system, which, on the highest deliberation, seems to be the best which can be obtained under present circumstances, I am convinced of the propriety of its being strenuously supported by all those who have wished for a National Republic of higher and more durable powers."<sup>1</sup>

Hamilton had written to Washington in the beginning of July that he disapproved of the hesitation of the convention in adopting a strong government "from fear of shocking the popular opinion" and that his impressions were that the people were ready for an "efficient constitution," and he continued, "I am seriously and deeply distressed at the aspect of the counsels which

<sup>1</sup> Sparks, "Letters to Washington," Vol. IV, p. 176.

prevailed when I left Philadelphia. I fear that we shall let slip the golden opportunity of rescuing the American Empire from disunion, anarchy, and misery," and he added that he would return to the convention when he had reason to believe that his attendance would not be mere waste of time.<sup>2</sup>

Later he had returned to the convention and had taken an active part in the closing proceedings and had signed his name to the Constitution; but he had not modified his views as to the necessity for a stronger form of government and hoped to see the monarchical principles in the Constitution extended. That these opinions had a wide prevalence among the Federal leaders is unquestioned and exerted a considerable influence upon the organisation of the government. When Jefferson came back from France in 1790, he was amazed to find among the leaders of the Federal party a strong bias towards monarchy. "I cannot describe the wonder and mortification with which the table conversations filled me. Politics were the chief topic, and a preference of kingly over republican government was evidently the favourite sentiment. An apostate I could not be, nor yet a hypocrite; and I found myself, for the most part, the only advocate on the republican side of the question, unless among the guests there chanced to be some member of that party from the legislative Houses."<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly these conversations exercised a profound influence over Jefferson and were the basis of his reiterated charges, later, against the Federal party that it was tending in the direction of monarchy. In these talks over the dinner table, he probably learned the true intent and aims of the leaders whatever might have been the opinions of the rank and file. The contests and victories of the Federalists in the state conventions had served to unite the forces in the states which were opposed to democracy and were in full control of the national government. When the federal government was organised there was no cloud on the horizon to indicate that a storm was brewing that would disturb the feeling of calm and security which the adoption of the Constitution had brought to the property classes. However much the democratic spirit might exist in the states and manifest itself in their assemblies, the federal government was sufficiently removed from the direct action of the people not to fear any attacks upon property. The aristocratic forces had triumphed in the state conventions and most of the people had little idea

<sup>2</sup> Sparks, "Letters to Washington," Vol. IV, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. IX, p. 91.

of the real bearing of the principles of the Constitution. The convention had been formed of delegates elected by a comparatively small number of the people and had been dominated by the property-holders of the commercial towns.

Beard says, "It appears that the Constitution was not 'an expression of the clear and deliberate will of the whole people,' nor of a majority of the adult males, nor at the outside of one-fifth of them." <sup>4</sup> Indeed, the country districts were only partially represented and the restrictions of the property qualifications of the suffrage excluded a large number of the people from any representation. "The voting," says Paullin, "was done chiefly by a small minority of interested property-holders, a disproportionate share of whom in the northern States resided in the towns, and the wealthier and more talented of whom, like a closed corporation, controlled politics." <sup>5</sup>

These interests were opposed, however, by a strong democratic element in the state convention of Massachusetts who were elected by the country districts and, though deficient in adequate leadership, strenuously fought against the adoption of the Constitution. It was by their efforts that the Federalists were finally induced to concede the adoption of a Bill of Rights as amendments to the Constitution. And by this conciliatory attitude, they were able to win over enough delegates to insure its adoption.

This policy of amendments did much to conciliate the opinion opposed to the Constitution, and being followed in other states and especially in Virginia, it was the means by which the Federalists secured the victory. Nevertheless the conflicts in the states had brought to light the antagonism between the different classes of society and the economic interests which dominated the Federal party. In analysing the causes underlying the opposition to the Constitution in the Massachusetts' convention, Harding gives three reasons which actuated the minority: first, the distrust with which men brought up in the democratic atmosphere of the New England town-meeting viewed all delegated power; a second element in the opposition seems to have been the conflict of interest, "partly real and partly fancied, between the agricultural and the commercial sections of the State." "Underlying and reinforcing these two elements was another in which, it may be said, lay the whole secret of the opposition. This was the pronounced antagonism between the aristocratic and democratic elements in the society of Massachusetts. Massachusetts was not

<sup>4</sup> Beard, "Economic Interpretation of Constitution," p. 250.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249.

alone in this experience; in most, if not in all, of the states a similar contest had arisen since the war. The men who at Philadelphia had put their names to the new Constitution were, it seems quite safe to affirm, at that time identified with the aristocratic interest. There can be no question that this feeling underlay most of the opposition in the Massachusetts convention."<sup>6</sup>

After the adoption of the Constitution, there was a general spirit of acquiescence to abide by the will of the majority and to give the Constitution a fair trial. The democracy, however, was not crushed and it only needed an administration of the Constitution along aristocratic lines to awaken again the forces of opposition. Two causes contributed to bring about the democratic revival. The first was the financial schemes of the government as proposed by Hamilton; and the second was the influence of the French Revolution.

Hamilton's financial plan involved the funding of the foreign and domestic debt incurred by the Congress of the Confederation, and issuing bonds at six per cent and borrowing \$12,000,000 to pay the interest which had been in default for some years. Owing to the defalcation of the interest, Confederate paper had depreciated much in value and many original holders had parted with their securities at ruinous prices, and they had been bought up by speculators and men of wealth. If these securities were funded at par, it would immensely enrich the present holders. To avoid this and to reimburse the original holders who had suffered through inability of the government to pay interest on the debt and who had parted with their securities at from two to three shillings on the pound, Madison proposed that the present holders should be paid only the market value of the securities which would yield them a handsome profit and that the remainder should be given to the original holders. This he justified on the ground of equity. The proposal led to an animated discussion and it was charged that it would be a violation of contracts which was a fundamental principle of the Constitution. This debate gave rise to divisions on party lines and the emergence of the antagonisms between the interests of the creditor and debtor classes which had been for some time in abeyance. After some weeks it was evident that the money men were in full control of the House and that the bill would pass. This information was imparted privately to the friends of many of the representatives and was used by them to enrich themselves and their associates.

<sup>6</sup>Harding, "Federal Constitution in Massachusetts," pp. 74-5.

"When the trial of strength on these efforts," says Jefferson, "had indicated the form in which the bill would finally pass, this being known within doors sooner than without, and especially, than to those who were in distant parts of the Union, the base scramble began. Couriers and relay horses by land, and swift-sailing pilot boats by sea, were flying in all directions. Active partners and agents were associated and employed in every State, town, and country neighbourhood, and this paper was bought up at five shillings, and even as low as two shillings in the pound, before the holder knew that Congress had already provided for its redemption at par. Immense sums were thus filched from the poor and ignorant, and fortunes accumulated by those who had themselves been poor enough before. Men thus enriched by the dexterity of a leader, would follow, of course, the chief who was leading them to fortune, and become the zealous instruments of all his enterprises."<sup>7</sup>

But the second part of the financial scheme created even more excitement. This was that the national government should assume the debts contracted by the states during the war. This was known as the Assumption Act. It was assailed as infringing upon the sovereignty of the states and as "a desire of bestowing on the general government an artificial strength by the creation of a moneyed interest which would be subservient to its will." While there was no difference of opinion among the parties over paying the national debt, but only as to the manner of payment, there was a decided opposition to the government paying the state debts. So acrimonious did the discussion become and so evenly divided were the parties, that the debate on the issue occupied some months. Once the Federal party obtained a majority, but the acceptance of the Constitution by North Carolina in April, 1790, and the entrance of their representatives into the House, changed the balance of parties in favour of the opposition. The bitterness of the controversy communicated itself to the country, and the Northern States began to talk of secession from the Union, unless the bill was passed. In this emergency, Hamilton appealed to Jefferson for aid to save the Constitution and bring unity into the government. A conference was held at Jefferson's house at which some of the Southern representatives met Hamilton and a deal was struck by which in consideration of Federal votes being given for the new capitol to be placed on the Potomac, enough Southern votes would be changed to pass the Assumption Act. This deal was carried out and by the

<sup>7</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. IX, p. 92.

change of the votes of two representatives of Virginia, the act was passed by the narrow majority of two votes. Jefferson claimed later that Hamilton took advantage of his ignorance of the financial situation and made him "hold the candle" to this fiscal manœuvre. The immediate effect of the funding of the national and state debts was to increase the fortunes of many individuals who held government securities and to ruin many others who had sold their paper under the stress of need during the period of depression. Marshall, the federal historian, tells us, "The public paper suddenly rose, and was for a short time above par. The immense wealth which individuals acquired by this unexpected appreciation could not be viewed with indifference. By those who participated in its advantages, the author of a system to which they were so greatly indebted was regarded with an enthusiasm of attachment to which scarcely any limits could be assigned. To many others this adventitious collection of wealth in particular hands was a subject rather of chagrin than of pleasure, and the reputation which the success of his plans gave to the secretary of the treasury was not contemplated with unconcern."<sup>8</sup>

The permanent effect of the passing of the funding bill and the Assumption Act was to establish a marked division between the members of Congress, and the formation of parties based upon the support or opposition to the financial schemes of the treasury. In the country at large, the financial measures led to a period of wild speculation and to new antagonisms between the creditor and debtor classes. The latter complained that they were being taxed in the interest of the wealthy classes and that the government favoured these classes. In the condemnation of these measures, Jefferson and Madison were agreed, and their criticism did much to arouse the spirit of opposition against the policy of the treasury and its administrator, and to rally the people around the standard of the Republican party. Dissensions now entered the cabinet, and wide differences of policy arose between Hamilton and Jefferson. Washington was disturbed by this dissension in his cabinet and wrote to both Jefferson and Hamilton, urging them to compose their differences in the interest of the common good. In reply Jefferson wrote a long letter to Washington in which he stated the grounds of his differences with Hamilton and made the charge that Hamilton was working with the aid of a "corrupt squadron" to establish an aristocracy and monarchy. "This corrupt squadron, deciding the voice of the legislature, have manifested their disposition to get rid of the limitations imposed

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, "Life of Washington," Vol. V, p. 313. Edition of 1807.

by the Constitution on the general legislature, limitations, on the faith of which, the States acceded to that instrument; that the ultimate object of all this is to prepare the way for a change from the present republican form of government to that of a monarchy, of which the English constitution is to be the model; that this was contemplated by the convention is no secret, because its partisans have made more of it. To effect it then was impracticable, but they are still eager after their object, and are predisposing everything for its ultimate attainment. So many of them have got into the Legislature, that, aided by the corrupt squadron of paper dealers, who are at their devotion, they make a majority in both houses. The republican party, who wish to preserve the government in its present form, are fewer in number; they are fewer even when joined by the two, three, or half dozen anti-federalists, who, though they dare not avow it, are still opposed to any general government; but, being less so to a republican than to a monarchical one, they naturally join those whom they think pursuing the lesser evil."<sup>9</sup>

As these ideas were fundamental in the policy pursued by Jefferson during the next seven years, it is of interest to know whether they were based upon facts or merely a delusion and a misconception of the policy of Hamilton. Undoubtedly Hamilton had advocated a monarchical form of government during the session of the Federal Convention. Since then he had in private conversation given the impression to Jefferson that a monarchical government was the best form of government.<sup>10</sup> It was one of the principles of Hamilton that men are governed either by interest or passion, and he deliberately planned to rally to the new government the moneyed classes and to bind them to it by their financial interests. He certainly had no sympathy with democracy and believed in the rule of the upper classes and that a government could only succeed if it was guided and controlled by these classes. Jefferson was not wrong in his impression of the theories of Hamilton and the tendencies and spirit of his administration.

"Years afterward, in his old age," says Channing, "Madison accounted for the breach between Jefferson and himself, on the one side, and Washington and Hamilton, on the other, by Hamilton's making perfectly plain, 'his purpose and endeavour to administration (administer) the Government into a thing totally different from that which he and I both knew perfectly well had

<sup>9</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. III, p. 361.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 96.

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been understood and intended by the Convention who framed it, and by the People adopting it.'"<sup>11</sup>

The ideas of the leading Federalists who controlled the party were in harmony with Hamilton's idea, and they did not hesitate all through their domination to express their mistrust of democracy. They were aristocratic in their tastes and ideas; and reactionary in their tendencies and policies. It was during the last years of their ascendancy that their monarchical principles became more pronounced and provoked the democratic uprising which overthrew their administration. To Jefferson the present administration of the government seemed to be subversive of the principles of liberty to which he had given expression in 1776.

Writing at the period of depression in the Republican party at the time of federal ascendancy by the fervour excited by the possibility of the French war, Jefferson had said, "The spirit of 1776 is not dead. It has only been slumbering. The body of the American people is substantially republican."<sup>12</sup>

It has commonly been the opinion that the Federalists represented the national party and the Republicans the States Rights or provincial party. But these terms do not represent the deep lines of cleavage between the two parties. The real issues between the parties rests upon a different basis. The Federalists were not simply national within the limits of the Constitution; they were national in the sense of stretching the implied powers of the Constitution in an effort to build up a strong government which would hold in check the democratic spirit of the states. The Republicans were not opposed to the Constitution, but they were opposed to giving the national government any powers beyond those granted by the Constitution and held to a theory of strict construction. They laid stress upon the state governments because they believed that they conserved the liberties of the people, and they felt that the national government was being used in the interest of special classes and as a restraint upon the democratic movement.

The traditional view and the view that has been handed down by many historians was that our national government owes its stability to the work of the Federalists. This is true so far as the administrations of Washington are concerned; but it is an over-emphasis on the work of the Federal party as a whole. In bringing out the democratic principles of the Constitution and in placing the administration upon a democratic basis, the credit

<sup>11</sup> Channing, "History," Vol. IV, p. 162.

<sup>12</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. IV, p. 300.



belongs to Jefferson and the Republican party. He was the one man among the great leaders of the Revolution who stood firmly for the principles of '76 and the rights of the people. Returning to this country from France at the time of the Revolution and its enthusiasm for the Rights of Man, he was at once struck with the change which had come over many of his friends during his absence of four years. Entering into the government and living in close contact with the Federal leaders, he was confirmed in his suspicions that they had lost their enthusiasm for republican principles. While these views were not uttered in public, nevertheless they expressed the real views of the men who framed the Constitution with the avowed purpose of curbing the forces of democracy. They recognised that their opinions were not in harmony with the mass of the people and that to attain their ends they must make some concessions to public opinion. It was in this spirit that they agreed to the first eleven amendments to the Constitution which embodied the ideas of a Bill of Rights. As Madison said at the time, they were passed with the idea of "quieting the people." But having conceded this, they felt that they could defy or ignore the democratic radicals in the states. The government was so strongly entrenched in the support of the property classes in the nation, that it seemed as though nothing could shake their domination. But the advent of the French Revolution was an event that was not foreseen and its influence upon the American spirit and the growth of the democratic movement was deep and lasting. It is doubtful whether the spirit of democracy in America would have been strong enough to overcome the aristocratic tendencies of Federalism unless it had been reinforced by contact with French principles.

The French Revolution was an event of transcendent importance for the cause of democracy in the world. It set in motion forces, and gave rise to principles, which gave to the democratic movement its irresistible character. It revived in the masses the principles of '76 and kindled the enthusiasm for democracy which ultimately broke the power of the Federal party. The dissemination of the principles of the Rights of Man awoke in the people a spirit of resistance to the domination of the aristocratic and property classes in the community. The effect of the French Revolution in America was not lost upon Jefferson. "The event of the Revolution," he writes, "there is now little doubted of, even by its enemies, the sensations it has produced here, and the indications of them in the public papers, have shown that the form our own government was to take, depended much more on the events of

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France than anybody had before imagined. The tide which, after our former relaxed government, took a violent course towards the opposite extreme, and seemed ready to hang everything round with tassels and baubles of monarchy, is now getting track as we hope to a just mean, a government of laws addressed to the reason of the people and not to their weaknesses." <sup>13</sup>

Whether Jefferson's sympathies led him to overstate the political situation or not, the fact remains that the French Revolution exerted a large influence upon the development of the democratic spirit in America.

Its principles were better understood than Hamilton's financial measures by the populace, and the cause of French liberty appealed strongly to the popular sympathies. It was the direct cause of dividing the people into two political parties in which the intensity and bitterness of the political struggle has seldom been equalled in American history. In this conflict, the motives of men of the highest standing were impugned, their reputations assailed, and their characters tarnished. Even Washington did not escape the assaults of republicans and, in the last years of his administration, he was unjustly attacked for his treaty with England and his alleged British sympathies. The charges and counter-charges made against the leaders of both parties are difficult to prove or disprove; but the bitterness of the struggle, the intensity of party passion, the scurrilous attacks by the partisans of both parties, show the lengths men will go in political warfare. Besides, they reveal the wide chasm which separated the two parties in their ideas of government and the vital nature of the principles which each party felt were at stake in the conflict.

At the beginning, the French Revolution had been hailed by all parties with enthusiasm and with hopes for its success. In America, as in England, it had been looked upon by all liberal-minded men as the beginning of a new era for humanity and the triumph of liberal principles. Lafayette had written to Washington with enthusiasm of the progress of the Revolution and he had been favourably disposed towards it. Marshall tells us that "but one sentiment respecting it prevailed; and that was a belief, accompanied with an ardent wish, that it would meliorate the condition of France, extend the blessings of liberty, and promote the happiness of the human race." <sup>14</sup>

But men's prejudices and sympathies for or against monarchy

<sup>13</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. III, p. 504.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall, "Life of Washington," Vol. V, p. 457

or democracy soon began to influence their judgment of the good effects of the Revolution. As early as January, 1790, Gouverneur Morris wrote to Washington denouncing the Revolution and all its work. This opinion was further increased by the publication of Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution" at the end of the year, and it put in opposition to it the same classes in America as in England who feared the coming up of democracy. As the Revolution progressed, and its subversive principles became more evident, the property classes became alarmed, and began to denounce its levelling tendencies.

The division of opinion among the people dates from the publication of Paine's pamphlet on the Rights of Man in May, 1791. This book was first published in England as an answer to Burke's treatise in February of that year.

Paine's pamphlet had come into the hands of Jefferson, and he had been so impressed with its ideas that he had sent it to an American publisher with a letter of commendation in which he had spoken of certain "political heresies" which he believed the book would counteract. The publisher issued the book with Jefferson's letter as a preface and this drew forth a series of articles by an anonymous writer under the name of Publicola in refutation of Paine's principles. Owing to the similarity of style and ideas to those published recently by John Adams under the title of "Discourses of Davila," Jefferson attributed these articles by Publicola to him. But when Jefferson's letter was published without his permission, he at once wrote a letter to Adams telling him that he had no intention of publicly attacking him. The articles, however, came from the family of Adams and were written by his son, John Quincy Adams.

The influence of Paine's book was due in some measure to its refutation of Burke's interpretation of the French Revolution, but in a larger degree to the principles of human rights which underlie representative government. Paine's theory was that "Sovereignty, as a matter of right, appertains to the Nation only, and not to any individual; and a Nation has at all times an inherent indefeasible right to abolish any form of Government it finds inconvenient, and establish such as accords with its interest, disposition, and happiness. The romantic and barbarous distinction of men into Kings and subjects, though it may suit the condition of courtiers, cannot that of citizens, and is exploded by the principle upon which Governments are now founded. Every citizen is a member of the Sovereignty, and, as such, can

acknowledge no personal subjection; and his obedience can be only to the laws."<sup>15</sup>

Paine had gained an immense popularity by his book on "Common Sense" published during the American Revolution, and his new book now commanded a wide circle of readers. It owed its extraordinary influence over the masses in England and America to its formulation of the principles of democracy and its emphasis on the Rights of Man. The attacks of Publicola only served to extend its principles and raised up a crowd of writers in the republican press who advocated Paine's ideas and assailed the Federal party as the upholders of aristocracy and monarchy. Its immediate effect was to align a large number of people with the Republican party and to instill into their minds a hatred of England and of monarchy. Jefferson wrote to Paine in July, 1791, on the commotion his book had caused, "Indeed I am glad you did not come away till you had written your 'Rights of Man.' That has been much read here with avidity and pleasure. A writer under the signature of Publicola has attacked it. A host of champions entered the arena immediately in your defence. The discussion excited the public attention, recalled it to the 'Defence of the American Constitution' and the 'Discourses on Davila,' which it had kindly passed over without censure in the moment, and very general expressions of their sense have been now drawn forth; and I thank God that they appear firm in their republicanism, notwithstanding the contrary hopes and assertions of a sect here, high in name but small in numbers. These had flattered themselves that the silence of the people under the 'Defence' and 'Davila' was a symptom of their conversion to the doctrine of king, lords, and commons. They are checked at least by your pamphlet, and the people confirmed in their good old faith."<sup>16</sup>

At this time, Jefferson was still in the cabinet and his feud with Hamilton over the results of his financial measures was becoming more bitter every day and was ultimately to end in his withdrawal from the government. He became strongly convinced that a scheme was on foot under the leadership of Hamilton to undermine the government and to change its character and that there was danger that the democratic elements in the nation would be crushed by the aristocratic and monarchical forces which controlled the government. He redoubled his efforts to awaken the people to this danger and by his private correspondence with

<sup>15</sup> "Rights of Man," p. 157, 1791. ••

<sup>16</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. III, p. 278.

Republican leaders fanned the flame of sympathy with revolutionary France. In June, 1792, he wrote to Lafayette, "While you are estimating the monster Aristocracy, and pulling out the teeth and fangs of its associate, Monarchy, a contrary tendency is discovered in some here. A sect has shown itself among us, who declare they espoused our new Constitution not as a good and sufficient thing in itself, but only as a step to an English constitution, the only thing good and sufficient in itself, in their eye. It is happy for us that these are preachers without followers, and that our people are firm and constant in their republican purity. You will wonder to be told that it is from the eastward chiefly that these champions for a king, lords, and commons come. They get some important associates from New York, and are puffed up by a tribe of Agioteurs which have been hatched in a bed of corruption made after the model of their beloved England. Too many of these stock-jobbers and king-jobbers have come into our Legislature, or rather too many of our Legislature have become stock-jobbers and king-jobbers. However, the voice of the people is beginning to make itself heard, and will probably cleanse their seats at the ensuing election."<sup>17</sup>

Jefferson was not wrong in his forecast of the effect of French sympathies upon the ensuing elections. The fall of the Monarchy on August 10, 1792, and the establishment of a republic had awakened boundless enthusiasm for France and the attack of the Germanic powers upon France with the purpose of restoring the ancient régime, elevated France into the position of the champion of human liberty. Under the stimulus of French ideas a wave of democratic enthusiasm seized the masses of the people and resulted in the elections of 1792, returning a Republican majority to the House of Representatives.

Later this spirit was augmented by the war which broke out between England and France and the issue of the Neutrality Proclamation in April, 1793. This proclamation was issued only after much deliberation by the cabinet and gave much offence to the partisans of France. The coming of the French ambassador, Genet, to America served to intensify this feeling. He landed at Charleston early in April and did not arrive at the seat of government until the tenth of May. In the meantime he had been received by the people of Charleston and the governor with wild enthusiasm and, presuming on his popularity, he undertook to issue letters of marque to privateers to prey upon English commerce, and fitted out the vessels with American seamen. On his

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 450.

journey north, he was received, by the cities through which he passed, with honours and public ovations and everywhere the people testified to their sympathy with France. His actions and speeches had been so disrespectful to the government to which he was accredited that it was debated whether he should be received; but the cabinet judged that it would be the best policy to receive him and that it would be unwise to give any cause of offence to France. The arrival of Genet at Philadelphia was the cause of another outburst of popular enthusiasm which manifested itself in civic festivals and public dinners at which the red cap of liberty was worn and toasts were given as expressing the union of America and France. England's conduct since the treaty of peace in 1783 and her refusal to fulfil its conditions were condemned and men asked with indignation whether the United States should pursue "a line of conduct entirely impartial between these two powers"? and they demanded "Whether the people of America were alike friendly to republicanism and monarchy, to liberty and despotism?"

In addition, democratic societies were organised in Philadelphia, New York, and Boston on the model of the Jacobin societies with the idea of supporting French liberty which were menaced by "European confederacy transcendent in power, and unparalleled in iniquity" and which was endangered by the "pride of wealth and arrogance of power" displayed in the United States. They also established committees of correspondence to guard against attacks upon republican sentiments and to repel attacks upon the "vital principles of civil liberty."<sup>18</sup>

Genet, presuming upon the popularity of his country and the sympathies of the people, openly violated the neutrality laws. Jefferson tried to moderate his zeal and to restrain his actions, but without effect. When Genet found that the government was determined to uphold the laws, he had the audacity to appeal over the head of Washington to the American people. This ended his career and the government demanded his recall. But his presence in the country had deepened the chasm between the people and divided the partisans of France and England into two distinct parties.

In consequence of these events, the bitterness of the struggle between the parties increased and the excesses of the democratic societies were charged against the Republican party by the Federalists. Their opposition to democracy became more pronounced. Jefferson withdrew from the cabinet at the close of

<sup>18</sup> Marshall, "Life of Washington," Vol. V., pp. 494-8. Edition of 1807.

1793 and retired to his home at Monticello, but he did not retire from an active interest in politics. He became the centre from which the movements of the Republican party were directed and the opposition of the people to aristocracy was stimulated. Jefferson was not a public speaker or a writer in the press; nevertheless he carried on an effective campaign by private correspondence, and by his close contact with Republican leaders, mobilized the forces of democracy. In spite of the excesses into which the Republican leaders in France had been led, he did not lose his faith in the triumph of democratic principles. It is a striking fact that neither Jefferson nor Madison were turned aside from sympathy with the French Revolution by the establishment of the Terror and the supremacy of Robespierre. Like Fox and Grey, the leaders of reform in England, no excesses of democracy could shake their faith in democratic principles. They looked at the larger interests at stake in the European struggle and saw beyond the immediate actions of its rulers, France fighting for liberty against the coalition of European despotism.

The excesses of democracy in France and the outburst of democratic agitation in America produced a different feeling in the Federal party. Its leaders privately wrote to each other, complaining of the evils of democracy and publicly denounced Jefferson in its press as the organiser and promoter of anarchy and lawlessness. Federalism, however, was still strong under the prestige and name of Washington and the people trusted in his guidance and leadership; but an event took place which shook the faith of many in his wisdom and gave rise to an outburst of bitter party passions. This was the treaty with England in 1795 which had been negotiated by John Jay. This treaty gave England the right to search American vessels on the high seas and allowed her to seize provisions as contraband provided that she paid for the cargoes. There was much dissatisfaction with the terms of the treaty and among the Republicans an outburst of indignation which did not spare even Washington himself. He had given a reluctant consent to the treaty and only signed it as the best way to prevent a possible war with England. It was amid this excitement over the treaty that Washington's second term drew to a close and he intimated that he would retire from public life. Under these conditions, the campaign for the presidency opened with great party passion and bitterness. The Federalists chose for their candidate John Adams. He was the one outstanding man in the party and was popular for his services during the Revolution. Hamilton would have preferred

another leader like Jay, but he realised that the crisis was too serious to risk the loss of the election by the Federal party. He wrote at this time, "It is far less important who of many men that may be named shall be the person, than that it shall not be Jefferson. . . . All personal and partial considerations must be discarded, and everything must give way to the great object of excluding Jefferson."<sup>19</sup>

In this attitude of Hamilton, the germs of a division in the Federal party later began to grow, and its immediate result was the organisation of a political campaign by the Federalists which was exceptional in its appeals to party passion. The republicans were not behind their opponents in the asperity of their campaign. They attacked Adams as the representative of the aristocracy and the advocate of the "wellborn" as being alone fit for office. His "Defence of the Constitution" and "Discourses of Davila" were brought to the front and he was accused of monarchical tendencies. On the contrary, Jefferson was charged by the Federalists as being an atheist and a representative of the levelling doctrines of democracy. In the excitement of party passion, the Republicans of Pennsylvania overreached themselves and went to such excesses in denouncing Adams that they turned many moderate men to the Federal party and lost to the Republicans one electoral vote. When the electoral vote was counted, Adams received 71 votes and Jefferson 68. The election was decided by the votes of three unknown electors of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North Carolina, who cast one vote each for Adams. Thus Adams' accession to the presidency was due to a chance vote and weakened his leadership in the Federal party. The leadership of the party was in the hands of Hamilton and he controlled the actions of the cabinet ministers, Pickering, McHenry, and Wolcott, who had served under Washington and who looked to Hamilton as their leader. This dominance by Hamilton of the cabinet had great influence on the fortunes of the Federal party and was one cause of the schism in the party, and contributed to the downfall of Federalism.

Adams began his administration under difficult circumstances and at the outset was faced with the problem of dealing with France which had taken an aggressive attitude in regard to the rights of neutrals, growing out of its dissatisfaction with the treaty with England.

The next two years were occupied with measures growing out of the possibility of war with France. Adams had appointed

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton, "Works," Vol. X, p. 195. Lodge edition.



three commissioners, Pinckney, Marshall, and Gerry, to try to come to some understanding with the French Government; but the Directory employed underhand methods and it was intimated to the commissioners that an agreement might be reached if the directors were paid personally a sum of money. The commissioners refused to enter into such an agreement and Marshall and Pinckney withdrew from Paris. Gerry remained and tried still to prevent a rupture between the two governments. In the meantime, Marshall wrote home a clear statement of all the facts, and the X. Y. Z. letters were published in which the ideas were suggested of buying a peace with the Directory. These letters produced a popular explosion and the country was carried away with a war fever with the cry, "Millions for defence, but not one cent for tribute."

The federal government now began active preparation for war with France. Congress voted to raise an army of eight thousand men and plans were laid to increase this to thirty thousand. Large sums were voted to build a navy, and to meet these expenses a loan was contracted at eight per cent together with increased taxation. Washington was chosen commander-in-chief and Hamilton, much against the desire of President Adams, was made second in command. Moreover, close relations were established with Great Britain in case of war, and towards the end of 1798, a British faction emerged who hoped that the war would furnish the opportunity to strengthen the national government. Under the war excitement, the democratic movement subsided and in the Southern States the people rallied around the federal government. Jefferson and the Republicans held that the differences with France could be settled by negotiations and that France did not really wish war with America; that the military preparations were unnecessary and that the establishment of a standing army was dangerous to the republic. After the first excitement, there had been a growing spirit among the people for an arrangement with France, but the government seemed bent upon war. Jefferson foresaw that a war would immensely increase the power of the national government and feared its effect upon republican institutions. At the beginning of 1799, he wrote, "If we are left in peace, I have no doubt the wonderful turn in the public opinion now manifestly taking place and rapidly increasing, will, in the course of the summer, become so universal and so weighty, that friendship abroad and freedom at home will be firmly established by the influence and constitutional powers of the people at large. If we are forced into war, we

must give up political differences of opinion, and unite as one man to defend our country. But whether at the close of such a war, we should be as free as we are now, God knows. In fine, if war takes place, republicanism has everything to fear; if peace, be assured that your forebodings and my alarms will prove vain; and that the spirit of our citizens now rising as rapidly as it was then running crazy, and rising with a strength and majesty which show the loveliness of freedom, will make this government in practice, what it is in principle, a model for the protection of man in a state of *freedom and order*.”<sup>20</sup>

It is difficult to determine just what were the ultimate aims of the Federal leaders, but certain expressions of Hamilton in private letters suggest that the army and the war were looked upon as a means of putting a new curb upon democracy. Hamilton was in touch with Miranda who, in conjunction with the British Government, had a scheme to invade South America. In August, 1798, he wrote to him, “The sentiments I entertain with regard to that object have been long since in your knowledge, but I could personally have no participation in it unless patronized by the government of this country. It was my wish that matters had been ripened for a co-operation in the course of this fall on the part of this country. But this can now scarcely be the case. The winter, however, may mature the project, and an effectual co-operation by the United States may take place. In this case I shall be happy, in my official station, to be an instrument of so good a work.”<sup>21</sup>

It was possibly the frustration of these schemes which accounts for the consternation of the Federal leaders when President Adams, without consultation with his cabinet or the Federal leaders, sent a message to the Senate, appointing Van Murray as a minister to France. Adams undoubtedly was opposed to war and intimations had come to him that France would receive an American minister and would adjust its differences with the government. The Senate dared not oppose this effort in the interest of peace. They appointed a special committee to wait upon the President and endeavour to induce him to change his plan; but they only succeeded in obtaining a modification and it was settled that three commissioners should be appointed instead of one. Ellsworth and Henry were selected with Van Murray for this commission. Every delay that was possible was made to the departure of the commission and they did not sail for France

<sup>20</sup> Jefferson, “Works,” Vol. IV, p. 295.

<sup>21</sup> Hamilton, “Works,” Vol. X, p. 316.

for some months after their appointment. Finally the President insisted on their departure and that negotiations be opened with France. This action of the President accelerated the decline in the war spirit and threw discredit upon the plans of the Federal leaders. The schism in the Federal party dates from this time and increased as the presidential election of 1800 approached. During this period, Congress had passed the Alien and Sedition laws and these had provoked the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions which threatened secession. These laws had caused much dissatisfaction among the people and the attempt to enforce them in the Federal Court of Pennsylvania, under Judge Chase, had increased the popular irritation. From now on there was a marked growth in republican sentiment in the Middle States and a dissatisfaction with the federal government and measures. Jefferson's letters show the rapid swing of the pendulum to the republican side. "A wonderful and rapid change," he writes, "is taking place in Pennsylvania, Jersey, and New York. Congress is daily plied with petitions against the alien and sedition laws and standing armies. Several parts of this State are so violent that we fear an insurrection. This will be brought about by some if they can. It is the only thing we have to fear. The appearance of an attack of force against the government would check the present current of the Middle States, and rally them around the government; whereas, if suffered to go on, it will pass on to a reformation of abuses." <sup>22</sup>

Writing to Pendleton in the same strain, he adds, "If we can keep quiet, the tide now turning will take a steady and proper direction. Even in New Hampshire there are strong symptoms of a rising inquietude." <sup>23</sup>

As the year progressed the Republican party gained in strength, and as Jefferson said the spirit of 1776 began to revive. When the year 1800 opened, the Federal party began to be alarmed by the prospects of defeat at the next election for President in November. All the signs pointed to a rising tide in favour of democracy, especially in the Middle States. While Adams had gained in popularity by his change in policy with France and was strong with the masses and second-class men, as Hamilton called them, in New England, yet he had lost ground in the Middle States of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania which would hold the balance of power in the next election. At this time the will of the people could only express itself

<sup>22</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. IV, p. 286.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288.

through the state legislatures which in the majority of states elected the presidential electors. In ten states this was the method of election, and only in six did it take place through a general ticket. It had been decided by the congressional caucus that Jefferson and Burr should be the nominees of the Republican party for President and Vice-President and Adams and Pinckney for the Federal party. The decision of the election turned upon the state elections in the pivotal states of New York and Pennsylvania which were held in the spring of 1800.

In Pennsylvania, the people returned a Republican house, but a Federal senate, and as the presidential electors were to be elected by the legislature, it led to a compromise by which eight Republican and seven Federalist electors were appointed. This resulted in misrepresenting the will of the people, as the state was strongly Republican; but the Senate had refused to pass again the law to elect by general ticket which had expired that year. Now all eyes were turned to the state elections in New York; for as it was Republican or Federal, it would decide the election for President. As the electors were to be selected by the legislature, its composition was all important. Moreover, in the present division of the parties in the state, the majority in the legislature would turn upon the nature of the twelve electors from New York City. Both parties centred their activities upon the city election and the Federalists, who had won the election the year before by a majority of 900, had high hopes of electing their ticket. The character of the electorate of the city favoured the Republican ticket, which was managed by the most skilful political organiser of the time, Aaron Burr. There were three divisions of the Republican party in the city: the first composed of Clinton and his following; the second of the Livingstons, and the third of Burr and his adherents. They were more or less divided on questions of policy and Clinton did not favour Jefferson for the presidency. But Burr managed by skilful manœuvring to unite these forces and to secure the consent of Clinton, Livingston, and General Gates to run at the head of the ticket and the other electors were also men of prominence in the Republican party. For some years the city had been the centre of democratic societies, and republican ideas had been making headway among the people. Under this combination of a strong ticket, unity of action among the Republican leaders, and sympathy of the masses with democratic ideas, the Federalists suffered an overwhelming defeat. It was characteristic of the Republican victories of this year that its strongholds were in

the cities rather than in the country districts and it was in the cities like Philadelphia, Boston, and New York that the Republican party rolled up its largest majorities. With the loss of New York City, the Federalists saw that their hope of controlling the legislature was gone and with it the defeat of the Federal party in the electoral college. Under these circumstances, they held a Federal caucus on the next day after the election, May 3d, and decided to appeal to Governor Jay to call together the present legislature which had a Federal majority and induce them to pass a law that the presidential electors should be elected by general districts. This would save the Federal cause, as by this method of election by the people of the state, rather than by the new legislature, they would probably secure five presidential electors. Hamilton was the prime mover in this plan and he wrote a letter to Jay in which he justified this action on the grounds that the nature of the crisis justified this extraordinary action. He writes, "It is easy to sacrifice the substantial interests of society by a strict adherence to ordinary rules. In observing this, I shall not be supposed to mean that anything ought to be done which integrity will forbid, but merely that the scruples of delicacy and propriety, as relative to a common course of things, ought to yield to the extraordinary nature of the crisis. They ought not to hinder the taking of a legal and constitutional step to prevent an atheist in religion, and a fanatic in politics from getting possession of the helm of state." After dwelling upon the dangerous principles of the Republican party and their revolutionary tendencies, he continued, "The calling of the legislature will have for object the choosing of electors by the people in districts; this (as Pennsylvania will do nothing) will ensure a majority of votes in the United States for a federal candidate. The measure will not fail to be approved by all the federal party; while it will, no doubt, be condemned by the opposite. As to its intrinsic nature, it is justified by unequivocal reasons of *Public Safety*." <sup>24</sup>

Jay did not answer the letter, but laid it aside, writing on the margin, "from one of the most distinguished federalists in the United States." Failing in this, Hamilton's next scheme was to discredit Adams and throw the Federal vote, if possible, for Pinckney. He knew that Adams was popular in the New England States, but hoped that enough votes from South Carolina could be turned to Pinckney to give him the lead over Adams. Since the New York election, Adams had dismissed two of his

<sup>24</sup> Hamilton, "Works," Vol. X, pp. 372-73.

cabinet ministers who were devoted to Hamilton and had spoken among his friends of a British faction. Hamilton had written to Adams in regard to this charge but had received no answer. Hamilton then published a pamphlet calling attention to the personal failings of the President and his unworthiness for the presidential office, but ending in the advice to the Federalists to vote for him. The pamphlet was printed for private circulation among the leaders of the Federal party; but Burr obtained a portion of the copy and printed it in the *New London Bee*. This forced Hamilton to publish the pamphlet with the result that it struck a staggering blow at the Federal party. Even Hamilton's firm friends disapproved of his course and Cabot wrote to him: "I am bound to tell you that you are accused by respectable men of egotism; and some very worthy and sensible men say you have exhibited the same vanity in your book which you charge as a dangerous quality and great weakness in Mr. Adams."<sup>25</sup>

But the downfall of the Federal party was not due to the schism in the party or the machinations of Hamilton. Adams was popular with the masses in New England and had still a strong hold on the Federalists in the other states, but his identification with the Federal measures, the Alien and Sedition bills, had lost to the party the popular vote in the cities of the Middle States. In the minds of the people, the Federal party represented the aristocracy and Adams was looked upon as an exponent of these principles. In the election of 1800, he carried all the states which he carried in the election of 1796 with the exception of New York and this turned upon the democratic character of the electorate. Jefferson and Burr received an equal vote in the electoral college, each receiving 73 votes, and this threw the election for President into the House of Representatives. Many of the Federalists were inclined to defeat the will of the people by voting for Burr to the exclusion of Jefferson. They believed that Burr would prove more pliable and would carry on the government on Federal principles. Hamilton expressed the grounds for the real opposition to Jefferson when he wrote to Bayard of Delaware concerning him, "That his politics are tinctured with fanaticism; that he is too much in earnest in his democracy."<sup>26</sup> But while he disliked Jefferson, he hated Burr and he tried to dissuade his friends from supporting him, but without success. On the first ballot in the House, it stood, eight states for Jefferson, and six for Burr with Maryland and Delaware divided.

<sup>25</sup> Lodge, "Life of Cabot," p. 300. ••

<sup>26</sup> Works of Hamilton, Vol. X, p. 413.

A majority of states was required for an election. This division continued for thirty-five ballots which consumed seven days. During this time there was much intrigue, and efforts were made by the Federalists to come to some understanding with the adherents of Burr, but he would give no pledges. Finally on the thirty-sixth ballot, Maryland and Delaware broke away and voted for Jefferson and this gave him ten states and the presidency. The contest was carried on amid much excitement among the people and some threats were made by the Republicans of the Middle States of arming, in case the will of the people was defeated by the Federalists. And some even of the Southern members went so far as to propose to hold a convention to decide the issue; but fortunately moderate opinions prevailed and cooled the heat of party passions.

However much the will of the people might have been checked by the complications in the manner of voting in the electoral college, it was the forces of democracy which ultimately decided the question. Jefferson was carried to victory on the wave of the democratic movement which had been gathering strength for the last ten years and which swept away the barrier of privilege which the Federalists had erected against it.

If the Federalists had triumphed in the election, it is unquestioned that the tendency would have been towards a stronger form of government.

Hamilton had written to McHenry in 1800, "In the two Houses of Congress we have a decided majority. But the dread of unpopularity is likely to paralyse it, and to prevent the erection of additional buttresses to the Constitution, a fabric which can hardly be stationary, and which will retrograde if it cannot be made to advance."<sup>27</sup>

Whatever Hamilton's real intentions were will never be known; but there can be no doubt that he hoped that some turn of the political wheel would strengthen the government in the direction of monarchy. Gouverneur Morris, some years after the death of Hamilton, wrote, "Our poor friend Hamilton bestrode his hobby to the great annoyance of his friends, and not without injury to himself. More a theoretic than a practical man, he was not sufficiently convinced that a system may be good in itself, and bad in relation to particular circumstances. He well knew that his favorite form was inadmissible, unless as the result of civil war; and I suspect that his belief in that which he called an approaching crisis arose from a conviction that the kind of

<sup>27</sup> Hamilton, "Works," Vol. X, p. 359.

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government most suitable, in his opinion, to this extensive country could be established in no other way." <sup>28</sup> It was fortunate for the country that the Federal party was checked at this period of its career and that it was not granted another administration in which to establish its principles of a strong government.

With the coming of Jefferson to the presidency, a change was effected in the methods of the administration of the government which turned it in the democratic direction and changed the whole history of the national development. The effect of this revolution upon the fortunes of democracy marks the next stage of its development.

<sup>28</sup> Letters of Gouverneur Morris, Vol. III, p. 216.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE POLITICAL REVOLUTION OF 1800: THE EXPANSION OF DEMOCRACY

THE change which the election of Jefferson wrought in the administration and in the sentiments and manners of the people were sufficient to constitute a revolution. It was the beginning of a new age and the culmination of forces which had long been preparing since the end of the War of the Revolution. It happened at a time when the forces of reaction were in the ascendency in Europe and when the democratic movement which had been awakened by the spirit of the French Revolution had everywhere been arrested and the democratic leaders driven into exile or oblivion. Occupied as Europe was with war, the significance of the Republican victory in America was not perceived, nor its meaning for the future of democracy in Europe foreseen.

The year 1800 in America was marked by two great changes in the nation; the one political, and the other social. The former led to the establishment of a government in the interest of the people; the latter wrought a transformation in their habits and sentiments. The Federalists were quick to discern the effects of these changes upon their fortunes as a party and upon their outlook on life. To them it meant the beginning of a new age in which the old points of view and the customs and habits of a lifetime would be swept away by the new ideas of the Rights of Man and the prevalence of French principles. "We are destined in this country," wrote Cabot, "as in all the free states who have gone before us, to sacrifice the essence of liberty to the spirit of democracy. We are now and have always been more democratic in our opinions and temper than the form of government. The tendency of the latter has been to balance, to regulate, and to correct the former; but its force, from the nature of its structure, was insufficient. It is in effect already overcome. Our government is in the hands of its enemies, and it is placed there because it is believed they are its enemies."<sup>1</sup>

In this opinion the Federalists were not wrong in their forecast of the change in the spirit of government; for the world was now

<sup>1</sup> Lodge, "Life of George Cabot," p 322.

to witness an experiment in democratic government which was contrary to all experience and which violated the prejudices and opinions of the governing classes. It was not unnatural that the Federalists should view this experiment with apprehension. It was an innovation on men's preconceived opinions of the government of society and destroyed their faith in the right of the talented and well-born to govern the nation. And this view was undoubtedly shared by the upper classes of Europe. It was a new thing in human history that the people should control their own affairs and conduct their own government. That the Federalists should predict all dire calamities from this revolution was not surprising. There was nothing in the past to lead them to think that anything but evil could come out of such an experiment in government. With a hundred and twenty-five years of democratic government and the experience of its stability and effectiveness, it is hard for men to-day to realise the consternation and dread with which cultured men of that time looked upon the ascendancy of the people. They had no precedents to rest upon and the rise of the democracy in France had not been such as to give them confidence in the future. On the contrary, its excesses and the disorders of the radical elements in America had done much to alarm the property classes. At the same time, if the Federalists had been able to discern the spirit of the age and to march with the ideas of the time, they might have led rather than have retarded the democratic movement; but they could not distinguish between the excesses of democracy in France under Jacobinism and the spirit of democracy in America under Jefferson. Hence the alarm with which they viewed his administration. While their permanent work remained in the organisation of the national government, yet by their refusal to move forward in harmony with the new times, they lost their hold upon the people and consigned their party to ultimate extinction.

Nevertheless a new era had begun and for good or ill the nation was embarked on the great experiment in democracy under the leadership of Jefferson. His inauguration was marked by its republican simplicity. There was no state coach to convey the President to the capitol; he walked from his boarding-house to deliver his inaugural address. There were no ceremonies or levees which had been a feature of the administration of Washington and Adams; for everything marked the democratic spirit of the new administration. Jefferson's address expressed the guiding principles of his administration and the policy he intended to pursue. It was carefully prepared and was perhaps the best

public document that he ever wrote. The address began in a conciliatory spirit and there was an evident attempt to allay the fears of his opponents as to the dangers of a complete overturn. Pointing out that the political contest had been "decided by the voice of the nation, announced according to the rules of the Constitution," Jefferson went on to say, "All, too, will bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, the will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate which would be oppression. Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and mind. . . . But every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all republicans—we are federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it."

Then he outlined the essential principles of government which would shape the policy of the administration: "Equal and exact justice to all men, of whatever state or persuasion, religious or political; peace, commerce, and honest friendship, with all nations—entangling alliances with none; the support of the State governments in all their rights, as the most competent administration for our domestic concerns and the surest bulwarks against anti-republican tendencies; the preservation of the general government in its whole constitutional vigor, as the sheet anchor of our peace at home and safety abroad; a jealous care of the right of election by the people—a mild and safe corrective of abuses which are lopped by the sword of the revolution where peaceable remedies are unprovided; absolute acquiescence in the decisions of the majority—the vital principle of republics, from which there is no appeal but to force, the vital principle and immediate parent of despotism; a well-disciplined militia—our best reliance in peace and for the first moments of war, till regulars may relieve them; the supremacy of the civil over the military authority; economy in the public expense, that labor may be lightly burdened; the honest payment of our debts and sacred preservation of the public faith; encouragement of agriculture, and of commerce as its handmaid; the diffusion of information and the arraignment of all abuses at the bar of public reason; freedom of religion; freedom of the press; freedom of person under the protection of the *habeas corpus*; and trial by juries impartially selected—these principles

form the bright constellation which has gone before us, and guided our steps through an age of revolution and reformation."

He advocated also "a wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, which shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labour the bread it has earned."

With a true instinct of the meaning of democracy, Jefferson placed the government on the broad base of the "will of the majority" and the rule of the people; with a prophetic insight into its ultimate aims, he pointed out that the government must be for the benefit of the great mass of the people—"Shall not take from the mouth of labour the bread it has earned." He was the first President who spoke sympathetically of the labouring classes and when the Labour movement developed later in American history, the multitude turned to Jefferson as the champion of their rights. As another mark of republican simplicity, he discontinued the custom of appearing in person before Congress to deliver his annual message and sent instead a written statement. This practice was followed by all the Presidents and was an established custom until the administration of Woodrow Wilson. The appearance of the President before Congress had been the occasion of much display and, in Jefferson's eyes, it savoured of monarchy.

In accordance with his suggestion of frugal economy, the Republican party in the House at once began to carry out this principle with repealing the excise taxes which were obnoxious to the people, especially in Pennsylvania. They reduced the army and navy and cut off a number of offices, thereby reducing the expenditure, and planned to pay off the national debt in eighteen years. "The midnight appointments," as Jefferson called them, of President Adams to offices during the last few days of his administration were disregarded. Indeed, all appointments which had been made since December 12, 1800, Jefferson considered as belonging to this class.

The Judiciary Act passed at the last session of Congress, which established sixteen circuit courts and under which Adams had appointed sixteen new Federal judges, was repealed and Jefferson refused to ratify the appointments. This action was strenuously opposed by the Federalists, who charged that it was an attack upon the security of persons and property. Moreover, the Republicans in the House did not stop here. They brought forward a plan for the impeachment of Judge Pickering, who had become a

drunkard, and succeeded in impeaching him, though evidence was brought out that he was insane; but such was the bitterness of party spirit, that this fact was ignored. They then tried to impeach Judge Chase, who had given great offence to the Republicans of Pennsylvania, and who had lately said in a charge to the jury that democracy was a terrible evil and was dangerous to the safety of the state. This roused the ire of the Republicans, and impeachment followed; but, after an extended trial, the prosecution failed to establish the fact that he had been guilty of misdemeanours justifying removal from the bench. These trials, however, expressed the hatred of the Republicans to the Federal judiciary.

But that which gave rise to even more bitter opposition by the Federalists was the passing of the XII Amendment to the Constitution, which ultimately destroyed the independence of the presidential electors and made the President directly elected by the people. In this controversy, the Federalists became the champions of State Rights and the strict construction of the Constitution. "We hold," said Griswold of Connecticut, "that our Constitution ought never to be changed till we are sure the change will do no harm to the Constitution itself. What, then, is our Constitution? It is a compact between independent and sovereign states. It is a bargain, a perfect compromise of the interests, the rights, powers, influences of a number of independent societies, and is no further binding on the makers than is set forth in the written document." He then pointed out that "the effect of the amendment, if carried, will thus be to strip the small States of one opportunity to have an equal vote with the large States in the election for a President."

To this the Republicans replied that "the Constitution is an experiment and ought to be amended whenever experience shows an amendment to be necessary. This the experience of 1800 has shown to be necessary." To the charge that it was an attack upon the small states, they answered, "The assent of three-fourths of the State Legislatures is necessary to make the proposition an article of the Constitution. Are three-fourths of the States in the Union large States? No. How, then, can the small States be stripped of any rights?"<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the amendment had the advantage of requiring each elector to vote for the President directly and not for two individuals, leaving the choice to the individual who had the majority vote. It was this that created the serious situation in

<sup>2</sup> McMaster, "History of the United States," Vol. III, pp. 184-6.

1800 and threw the election into the House of Representatives. The amendment was carried by a vote of 88 to 31 and was soon after ratified by the states. This alarmed the Federalists and from this period dates the beginning of the secession talk of 1804.

But more marked than the political change in the administration was the revolution in the habits and sentiments of the people. Democratic ideas made extensive inroads upon the old customs and manners of the people and republican principles were accepted as the standard of government. The principle that the will of the majority should prevail became the cardinal principle with the people, and they began to question the right of the property classes to control the governments of the states. An event occurred which, though scarcely noticed at the time, marked a mile-post in the progress of democracy. That was the admission of Ohio into the Union in 1803, with a constitution which abolished the property qualification of the suffrage and allowed every inhabitant of the state to vote who had a legal residence. Other features of the constitution marked the triumph of republican principles and the Rights of Man. The constitution contained a Bill of Rights and the old division of powers—executive, legislative, and judicial. But the governor was deprived of the veto and could make no nominations which were reserved to the senate and the house. They not only filled all civil offices, but elected the judges to serve seven years. This was the first infringement by democracy in the life tenure of judges and marked a great advance in democratic ideas. This result was probably brought about by the attack upon the judiciary by the general government and by the great excitement caused in Pennsylvania over this issue. There, the contest over the judges led to a demand to revise the constitution and to make the judges elective. The controversy was so bitter that it rent the Republican party in twain. In the election which ensued between Simon Snyder, who was nominated for governor by the Republican members of the senate and the house, and Governor McKean, who represented the Constitutionalists and the upholders of the judiciary, the ultra Republicans were defeated and the demand for a constitutional convention subsided. It was characteristic of the demands of the radicals that their ideas were similar to those adopted in the constitution of Ohio; namely, the election of governor, senators, and judges every two years; the appointments to be made by a committee of the Assembly; and the settlement of all suits by arbitration.<sup>3</sup> ••

<sup>3</sup> McMaster, "History of the United States," Vol. III, p. 162.

As the time for the presidential election approached in 1804, it became evident that state after state had gone over to the Republicans and that in the New England States alone the Federalists retained their power. But even there the new spirit was in evidence and the uprising of the people threatened the supremacy of the Federalists. On May 11th, a great gathering of Republicans took place at Hartford, and Abraham Bishop was the orator of the occasion and delivered an address which, by its radical ideas, alarmed the Federalists. He began his address by saying, "We have before rejoiced that the aristocratic factions of our country were humbled; that the energetic measures of the reign of terror were at an end, and that in the person of our Chief Magistrate was expressed the public sentiment in favour of the principles of our Revolution." "He is demonstrating that a republican government is the strongest on earth and that the will of the people, faithfully expressed, forms the most perfect system of laws and policy."

Bishop claimed that Connecticut had no constitution and was governed under the old charter which was abrogated at the time of the Revolution and that "the people of this free State should, like the people of other free States, have been convened to form a Constitution: But the legislature, which was not impowered for that purpose, and which may repeal at pleasure its own laws, *usurped* the power of enacting the form of government, contained in the charter of King Charles, should be the civil constitution of the State." He also claimed that the whole power of the state was in the hands of seven lawyers who formed a majority of the council and that in the house "more than one-half of the members are annually dependent on the seven for appointment as judges or justices or for military promotion."<sup>4</sup>

He pointed out the methods pursued by the oligarchy to maintain their power in the state, saying, "The whole State Government being aristocratic, the leaders saw ruin in the advance of our cause—therefore every man, who cherished republican principles, was derided and abused as a deserter from steady habits—every man who questioned the infallibility of our State oracles was held up to contempt. If any man spoke of liberty, equality, or the principles of our Revolution, he was denounced as an innovator and an illuminat."<sup>5</sup>

"For a remedy of all these evils in our State Government, we propose that the people shall be convened to form a Constitution

<sup>4</sup> Bishop, Oration delivered at Hartford, 1804, pp. 7-10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 16.

which shall separate Legislative, Executive, and Judicial powers, shall define the qualifications of freemen so that legislators shall not tamper with election laws, and shall district the State, so that freemen may judge of the candidates for their suffrages." "The old doctrines of taxation and representation inseparable ought to be revived. Every man who pays money or renders public services, common or military, should have a voice in choosing the men who are to gauge his pocket or estimate his strength, and there is no danger in suffering the poor man's vote to weigh as much as the rich man." He thought a constitution formed on these principles would "give a death-blow to Connecticut Federalism."<sup>6</sup>

In June these demands came before the General Assembly in the form of a Suffrage Bill. The bill was lost and the Republicans now began to agitate for a constitutional convention. A circular letter was sent to the Republican leaders in each town and ninety-seven towns out of one hundred and thirteen responded and sent delegates to the convention, held at Hartford on August 22, 1804. The session was secret and its decisions were revealed in an address which was issued to the people. In this it was asserted that the State had no constitution and that the legislature had no authority under the old charter to exercise its powers. It demanded a constitution which should embody the following principles: "No taxation without representation; free exercise of all religions; separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers; independent judges, universal suffrage, and the district system of choosing assistants and representatives to Congress."

Challenged in its stronghold by the democratic spirit, the Federalists at once began an attack upon the Republicans in their newspapers and endeavoured to alarm the farmers who possessed the freehold vote, by setting forth the destructive tendencies of democracy. They warned the people to beware of the evils of universal suffrage and pointed out that an extension of the franchise never yet "failed to bring with it those triple horrors, Catholics, Irishmen, and Democratic rule."<sup>7</sup>

These attacks succeeded, and in September the Federalists elected seven of the eighteen candidates selected by the Federal caucus. While the Federalists were successful at this time in holding the state, yet the campaign foreshadowed the ultimate defeat of their party. Ideas and principles had been set before

<sup>6</sup> Bishop, Oration delivered at Hartford, 1804, pp. 17, 22.

<sup>7</sup> McMaster, Vol. III, pp. 190-2.



the people which were destined to awaken public opinion and lead in a few years to the triumph of Republican principles.

The same spirit was manifested in Massachusetts, and the Federalists waged a bitter campaign in 1804 to hold the state in the Federal column. Fearing that the legislature might return enough Republicans to divide the electoral vote for President, they changed the method of voting and passed a law that electors should be elected by general ticket; but by this measure they failed to gauge the trend of public opinion and only succeeded in throwing the election into the hands of the Republicans. For the first time since the national government was formed, the electoral vote of Massachusetts for President was given to the Republican party.

The leading Federalists were not oblivious to the meaning of the Democratic movement. They early discerned that it would ultimately result in the destruction of their power in the New England States, unless it could be checked in its first beginnings. Early in the year, Pickering and the other members of the Federal party in Congress had written to the Federal leaders at home, urging the secession of the New England States and New York and the formation of a Northern Confederacy. The rapid spread of democratic ideas among the people, the adoption of the principle of the majority rule, the election of the President by the people in accordance with the XII Amendment, the attacks upon the judiciary, all seemed to create a "crisis" which Pickering and his colleagues thought could only be met by the withdrawal of the Northern States from the Union. But in this opinion he was not supported by Cabot, Hamilton, Ames, or King, the Federal leaders. This proposition was made before the outbreak of the Democratic spirit in Connecticut or the Republican land-slide in Massachusetts in the fall elections. At the same time, the leaders were thoroughly alarmed by the spread of democracy and looked upon the future with dread. This spirit of secession is usually minimised in the histories of the times, but these incidents in the history of the Federal party were vital factors in the progress of democracy and it is probable that its opposition had much to do with driving democracy forward. Had the Federalist been able to recognise the temper of the people and to co-operate with them, rather than oppose them, the movement of democracy might have been much slower. But their contempt for the people, their refusal to grant any concessions to the popular demand had much to do with stirring up the Democratic spirit in New England. After the election of Jefferson in 1800, it was inevitable that

democracy should go on to its logical conclusion; namely, universal suffrage. The principles of the Rights of Man, once planted in the minds of the people, were destined to work a change in the spirit of the government. To combat these principles, the Federalists put forth all their strength and the methods that they pursued and the fortunes of their party were determined by this conflict. The dread of democracy pushed them into a position which made them for a time disloyal to their country and which led them to consider schemes to break away from the Union. In all their discussions of this question, the fear of democracy is the overshadowing issue. And though Cabot and Hamilton dissented from the scheme of Pickering, they did so only because the scheme seemed impracticable.

Writing to Pickering on his proposal for secession, Cabot says, "All the evils you describe and many more are to be apprehended; but I greatly fear that a separation would be no remedy, because the source of them is in the political theories of our country and in ourselves. A separation at some period not very remote may probably take place. The first impression of it is even now favourably received by many; but I cannot flatter myself with the expectation of essential good to proceed from it, while we retain maxims and principles which all experience, and, I may add, reason, too, pronounce to be impracticable and absurd. Even in New England, where there is among the body of the people more wisdom and virtue than in any other part of the United States, we are full of errors, which no reasoning could eradicate, if there were a Lysurgus in every village. We are democratic altogether, and I hold democracy in its natural operation to be the government of the worst."<sup>8</sup>

Cabot, however, was only opposed to secession at the time because it seemed impracticable and ineffectual. He thought that the time might come "when it will be demanded by the people of the North and East, and then it will unavoidably take place."<sup>9</sup>

Higginson, writing to Pickering in March, 1804, expressed the opinion, "We all agree there can be no doubt of its being desirable; but of the expediency of attempting it, or discussing it now at this moment, we all much doubt." He considered it dangerous to continue under the Virginia system; but did not know how to extricate himself at present. Besides the state of the public mind would not permit such an attempt. "A small part only of those called Federal, and who in common cases usually go with us, are

<sup>8</sup> Lodge, "Life of George Cabot," p. 341.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

sound in their opinions, and willing to look into their real situation. They have yet much of the Democratic taint about them. . . . As, in the present state of things, it would be imprudent even to discuss the question. . . . Democracy is rising, and will increase in this State. Our elections may this year give us a majority in both houses, and Governor Strong; but, without some favourable events, the Democrats will succeed another year, and we shall be revolutionised, and the other States will follow."<sup>10</sup>

Reeves of Connecticut thought that the favourable moment had arrived for separation and that a bold address by the gentlemen in Congress to their constituents would prepare the minds of the people for it; and he added that "I know that it will animate the body of the people beyond any other possible method, and give a death-wound to the progress of Democracy in this part of the country."<sup>11</sup>

While Hamilton dissented from the scheme of Pickering at the time as impracticable, yet he consented to attend a meeting later in the autumn in Massachusetts to consider the whole question. In the local politics of New York at the elections in April, he had been led to make some statements derogatory to the character of Aaron Burr which led to a challenge from Burr to fight a duel, and to Hamilton's untimely death. Two years earlier he had recognised the effectiveness of the methods employed by the Republican leaders in controlling the democratic masses in the cities and had planned an association to counteract their influence and win the people to the Federal cause; but he was too much of an aristocrat in thought and feeling to succeed. He had thought then that "the time may ere long arrive when the minds of men will be prepared to make an effort to *recover* the Constitution, but the many cannot now be brought to make a stand for its preservation. We must wait a while."<sup>12</sup>

But conditions had not improved in the interval between this period and his death. The last letter which he wrote to Sedgwick, the day before he was shot, breathes the spirit of despair and hopelessness over the struggle against democracy. "Dismemberment of our empire will be a clear sacrifice of great positive advantages without any counterbalancing good, administering no relief to our real disease, which is *democracy*, the poison of which, by a subdivision, will only be the more concentrated in each part, and consequently the more virulent."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> "Life of Cabot," p. 453.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 443.

<sup>12</sup> Hamilton, "Works," Vol. X, p. 426.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 458.

Hamilton's death left his party without a leader, and, above all, without an organiser; but it fought on and went down finally to defeat with its flag flying against democracy. The Federalists realised its power, but they lived in hopes that the people would be cured of their disease and would return again to their natural leaders. After the great Republican victory of 1804, the tide turned and for a time the foreign policy of Jefferson played into their hands. The complications growing out of the renewal of the European war embarrassed Jefferson and he failed to meet the national aspirations in defending the commerce of the country and securing reparations for the attack upon the Chesapeake. The weakness of his policy and his failure to come to an understanding with Great Britain laid him open to the charge by the Federalists of French sympathies. Under his foreign policy of the Non-interference Act and the Embargo Act as a counter-poise to the British Orders in Council and Napoleon's Berlin and Milan decrees, the commerce of New England was ruined, industries were closed down, and multitudes were thrown out of employment. Under these conditions, Jefferson lost ground among the moderate Federalists, his popularity declined; and the Federal leaders regained much of their influence in New England and might have regained more in the nation, if they had had a capable leader. Had Jefferson resorted to a vigorous foreign policy and built up the American navy, he would not only have regained his popularity, but in all probability have prevented the war with England. He could not bring himself to prepare for war and to depart from his general policy of non-interference in the European situation. He retired from the presidency after the close of his second term and left the problems to his successor, James Madison.

The next four years were occupied with controversies growing out of the impressment of American seamen by the British commanders and attacks upon neutral commerce by both Great Britain and France. These depredations upon American commerce aroused the nationalists' spirit in the Southern and Western sections of the country where the spirit of independence had been fostered by the democratic character of the people. This spirit was represented in Congress by Calhoun and Henry Clay, who led the party which was determined to defend American rights and who supported Monroe, the Secretary of State, in his determination to force England to repeal her Orders in Council. The controversy ended in the War of 1812, which was denounced as a wicked and useless war by the Federalists. The leaders in war

were the young men who were fired by the nationalist spirit and avowed as their ultimate aim the conquest of Canada; but the opening campaign was badly handled by the administration and the army failed in its objective. From the beginning, the war was opposed by the New England States, and the governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut refused the requisition of the national government for militia to replace the regulars in defending the forts on the coast. On the sea the American navy won many laurels in their single combats with English warships; but the American frigates were few, and by the close of the war they had been driven off the ocean. The war dragged on, and apart from the victory of Perry on Lake Erie, did not fulfil the hopes of the nationalist party. In 1814, Washington was taken by the British and some of its buildings burned, and towards the end of the year the outlook was gloomy and uncertain.

The discontent in New England with the policy of the administration, the stagnation of commerce and widespread unemployment, and the state of the national finances turned the thoughts of the Federal leaders again to the idea of secession. The legislature of Massachusetts suggested calling a convention to consider these questions and invited the other New England States to send delegates. The convention met at Hartford at the beginning of December, 1814, and fortunately its delegates were chosen from among the more moderate of the Federalists. Pickering complained of some of the selections and Mr. Lowell said, "I have been unable to discover what Mr. Cabot's views are." The convention elected Cabot president, held a secret session for three weeks, and then disbanded. It formulated a report which was issued to the people and set forth its aims and conclusions. After calling attention to the oppression of the government and the miseries of the war and contrasting the present state with the prosperity of the country under Washington and Adams the paragraph concluded with saying, "But to attempt upon every abuse of power to change the Constitution would be to perpetuate the evils of revolution." At the same time, the report went on to say, "Finally, if the Union be destined to dissolution by reason of the multiplied abuses of bad administrations, it should, if possible, be the work of peaceable times and deliberate consent. Some new form of confederacy should be substituted among those states which shall intend to maintain a federal relation to each other. Events may prove that the causes of our calamities are deep and permanent. They may be found to proceed, not merely from the blindness of prejudice, pride of opinion, violence of party spirit,

or the confusion of the times; but they may be traced to implacable combinations of individuals or of States to monopolise power and office, and to trample without remorse upon the rights and interests of commercial sections of the Union. Whenever it shall appear that these causes are radical and permanent, a separation by equitable arrangement will be preferable to an alliance by constraint among nominal friends, but real enemies, inflamed by mutual hatred and jealousy, and inviting by intestine divisions contempt and aggression from abroad. But a severance of the Union by one or more States, against the will of the rest, and especially in time of war, can be justified only by absolute necessity. These are among the principal objections against precipitate measures tending to disunite the States; and when examined in connection with the farewell address of the Father of his Country, they must, it is believed, be deemed conclusive." 14

That nothing came of the Hartford convention was largely due to the coming of peace. The treaty of peace was signed at Ghent in December, 1814, but the news did not arrive in America until the end of January, 1815. In the meantime, the army under General Jackson had fought the battle of New Orleans and gained a brilliant victory. When the news of this victory arrived at the seaboard, it led to an outburst of popular enthusiasm and the spirit of gloom gave way to public rejoicings. With returning peace, the revival of commerce and disappearance of unemployment, the discontent of New England subsided. The end of the war had ruined the hopes of the more ardent Federalists and the Republicans treated the Hartford convention with ridicule. That such a convention should have been held during the war reacted against its leaders and covered them with obloquy. It sounded the death-knell of the Federal party.

The immediate effect of the war was to stimulate the national spirit and to unite the people solidly around the general government; but even a greater result was the inauguration of the era of good feeling which was marked by the decline of party spirit and the absorption of the Federalists in the Republican party. The South retained its grip upon the government in alliance with the democratic elements of the North, and Monroe was elected President in 1816 with 183 electoral votes against 34 by the Federal party. In 1820, the Federal vote had disappeared and Monroe was re-elected, receiving all the votes of the electoral college, save one. The Republicans were triumphant all along

"Lodge, "Life of Cabot," p. 512.

the line and controlled all the departments of the government with the exception of the judiciary.

But the marked feature of this period of good feeling was the growth of the democratic movement and the extension of the franchise. Democracy took on renewed vigour and the new spirit, was seen in the demand for constitutional conventions in the New England States which broke the last defences of the Federal power. The first convention was held in Connecticut in 1818 and was an attack upon the last stronghold of the Federal party. The movement looking towards this end began in 1816. The agitation of Bishop and the Republicans ten years before had borne fruit and the progress of liberal ideas had awakened a strong opposition against the religious domination of the Congregational hierarchy. Many of the moderate Federalists joined the Republicans or Democrats as they were now beginning to call themselves, and organised a local party who "were friends of toleration and reform." This party nominated Oliver Wolcott, the old Federal minister under Adams, for governor, and Jonathan Ingersoll, a leading Episcopalian layman, for deputy governor. Wolcott had retired for fourteen years from politics and gone to New York and made a fortune and lived down the old antagonisms. He was opposed to the Hartford convention and was a strong advocate of the Union. He had resisted the bigotry of the Congregational establishment and was a friend of toleration. The new political party called themselves at first American, and then "American and Toleration." It was beaten at the polls in 1816, though it succeeded in electing its deputy governor, Ingersoll. The Federalists carried their ticket, but with a diminished majority and were able to cast the vote of the state for the Federal candidate for President, Rufus King. The election foreshadowed the coming political revolution. In the legislature, the Federalists adopted a conciliatory policy, but failed to win over the people. The next year, the Toleration party put forward the same ticket and Oliver Wolcott was elected with a majority of 600. This was not large, but it indicated the trend of events and revealed the change that had come over the mind of the electorate in a few years.

The new administration succeeded in passing a law "securing equal rights, powers and privileges to Christians of every denomination in this State." The next year, the Toleration party, now under the name of "Constitution and Reform," again carried the elections and secured complete control of the government and a majority over the Federalists in the House of Representatives. The principal business of the session of 1818 was that of calling a

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constitutional convention to change the frame of government. The call was issued to elect delegates for a convention on July 4th to meet on the fourth Wednesday of August. Each party put forth its efforts to elect its strongest men and the Toleration party succeeded in securing a majority of the delegates. A committee was formed to draft a constitution and its main features were a Bill of Rights, a legislature of two houses, a governor with the veto, and the judiciary as a separate body. The constitution was adopted on September 15th, but was opposed by the ultra Democrats because the property qualifications of the franchise were retained, though much extended. It was ratified on October 5th by a majority of 1554 in a total vote of 28,282. Under the new constitution the Democrats gained by the abolition of the old charter and by the formulation of a Bill of Rights and the Toleration party was satisfied by the abolition of religious disabilities. But the breach in the old system had been made and later amendments were in a liberal direction.

It was not, however, until 1845 that an amendment was passed which abolished property qualifications and established universal suffrage. Ten years later, in 1855, this clause of the Constitution was revised, requiring each voter to read an article of the Constitution.

In New York a similar popular uprising had taken place and the democratic movement had culminated in calling a constitutional convention in 1821. This convention was the most important for the cause of democracy that had ever been held in the Eastern States up to this time. The leader in the movement was Martin Van Buren. He was the acknowledged leader of the Democratic party and he gave great offence to the Federalists at this time by declaring his political sentiments in which he had said that he had "a living faith in man's capacity for self-government and an unconquerable hostility to arbitrary and illegal power, in whatever shape it might appear."<sup>15</sup>

Under the old Constitution of 1777, the franchise had been limited to freeholders and actual tenants. The freeholders were divided into two classes: those with fifty dollars could vote for representatives, but a vote for governor and senator required the possession of an unencumbered freehold to the value of two hundred and fifty dollars. It was said that in the old Constitution the "germ of aristocracy had been mingled with the seeds of liberty which they planted, and began to produce bitter fruit." The property qualifications had always given an aristocratic

<sup>15</sup> Holland, "Life of Van Buren," p. 122.



character to the government and it was often controlled by great families like the Clintons and the Livingstons though they were republican in politics. The legislature was open to corrupt influences and bills were often passed in the interest of the money classes. In the legislature of 1820, the Democrats had a majority in both houses and they proposed a bill for calling an unrestricted convention of the people for revising the Constitution. Governor De Witt Clinton vetoed the bill. This provoked a popular outbreak in favour of the bill, and the legislature, in response to the popular demand, enacted in January, 1821, a law making the constitutional convention the great issue of the elections in the ensuing April. At the polls in April, the people by a large majority voted in favour of the convention and decided that the delegates should be elected by an enlarged constituency. In June the elections took place and the Federalists put forward their strongest men; namely, Chancellor Kent, Chief Justice Spencer, and Justices Van Rensselaer and Van Vechten, and they were elected. Van Buren was returned by the electors of Otsego County without his solicitation. The freehold farmers voted solidly in favour of the convention and gave a strong support to the Democratic delegates.

The convention met in August, 1821, and the great question at issue was the elective franchise. In the preceding July, Van Buren had given, at a public dinner, the leading sentiment of the day, "The elective franchise: Existing restrictions have proved to be as impolitic as they are unjust; it is the office of wisdom to correct what experience condemns."<sup>16</sup>

But the Democrats had to move carefully in their advocacy of the franchise, as they were faced by a strong opposition headed by Chancellor Kent and Chief Justice Spencer together with the associate justices, Platt and Van Ness, who endeavoured to awaken the fears of the freehold farmers against Democracy. Owing to the opposition, Van Buren urged his followers not to attempt too much, but to confine themselves to "those wise and salutary amendments which the public voice and the public interest demands," adding, "We should beware of vibrating to extremes." The first questions which came before the convention were those of the governor's veto, the reorganisation of the judiciary, and the powers of the legislative body. Heretofore the veto power had been in a council in which the justices were included.

The convention decided to abolish the council and confine the

<sup>16</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Van Buren," 1889, p. 69.

responsibility to the governor with the veto over legislation. But the great debate centred around the franchise and this began on September 19th, when both parties marshalled their forces for the struggle. At this time more than one-half of the male inhabitants of New York were excluded from the suffrage. Its extension was demanded by a large proportion of the electors. The question of universal suffrage was complicated by the presence of the coloured people in the state who numbered fifty thousand and by the remnants of slavery which were passing away under a gradual emancipation.

There was a strong opposition to giving the vote to the coloured man. The committee, however, reported a plan to abolish the property qualification and to confer the franchise on every man with six months' residence "who had paid taxes, or served in the militia, or worked on the highways." This was a long way from universal suffrage, but it aroused fierce opposition. "The scheme," said Sanford, "will embrace almost the whole male population of the State." An effort was made to confine the suffrage to tax-payers, and Spencer pointed out the dangers of extending the franchise to "those who work in factories, and are employed by wealthy individuals in capacity of labourers. Under the notion that there is a call for extending the rights of suffrage, this report goes to the most extravagant lengths."<sup>17</sup>

Another member of the opposition, Erastus Root, objected to the report: "There is danger of extending the right of suffrage too far," and he continued, "I do not desire any strolling voters nor any broomstick voters. I only want those who may contribute to the defence of the country. They should be armed and equipped according to law, before they should be privileged to vote. . . . Those excluded will be a very small proportion, and not of the description of people who are of any value."<sup>18</sup>

The next day, Chief Justice Spencer, encouraged by the direction the debate had taken, returned to the charge, saying, "The sober sense of the community had not demanded deep and dangerous innovation." "Are we jealous of property, that we should leave it unprotected? To the beneficence and liberality of those who have property we owe all the embellishments and the comforts and blessings of life. . . . Let us take care, whilst we nominally give the right of voting to a particular description of our citizens, that we do not in reality give it to their employers. The man who feeds, clothes, and lodges another has a real and

<sup>17</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Van Buren," 1889, p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

absolute control over his will. Say what we may, the man who is dependent upon another for his subsistence is not an independent man, and he will vote in subservience to his dictation."<sup>19</sup>

But the grounds of opposition to the extension of the suffrage were best expressed by Chancellor Kent, the Federal leader, who voiced the sentiments of the Federal party. He said: "The Senate should continue as heretofore, the representative of the landed interest, and exempted from the control of universal suffrage. . . . By the report before us, we propose to annihilate at one stroke all those property distinctions, and to bow before the idol of universal suffrage. That extreme democratic principle, when applied to the legislative and executive departments of government, has been regarded with terror by the wise men of every age. . . . If we are like other races of men, with similar follies and vices, then I greatly fear that our posterity will have reason to deplore in sackcloth and ashes the delusion of the day. . . . I wish to preserve our Senate as the representative of the landed interest—I wish them to be always enabled to say that their freeholders cannot be taxed without their consent. . . . The apprehended danger from the experiment of universal suffrage, applied to the whole legislative department, is no dream of the imagination; it is too mighty an excitement for the moral constitution of men to endure. The tendency of universal suffrage is to jeopard the rights of property and the principles of liberty. . . . The growth of the city of New York is enough to startle and awaken those who are pursuing the ignis fatuus of universal suffrage. . . . We are destined to become a great manufacturing as well as commercial State. We have already numerous and prosperous factories of one kind or another; and one master-capitalist, with his one hundred apprentices and journeymen and agents and dependents, will bear down at the polls an equal number of farmers of small estates in his vicinity, who cannot safely unite for their common defence. Large manufacturing and mechanical establishments can act in an instant, with the unity and efficacy of disciplined troops. It is against such combinations, among others, that I think we ought to give to the freeholders, or those who have interest in land, one branch of the Legislature for their asylum and their comfort. Universal suffrage, once granted, can never be recalled. There is no retrograde step in the rear of democracy. However mischievous the precedent may be in its consequences, or however fatal in its effects, universal suffrage never can be recalled or checked but by the

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

strength of the bayonet. We stand, therefore, at this moment on the brink of fate, on the very edge of the precipice. If we let go our present hold on the Senate, we commit our proudest hopes and our most precious interests to the waves."<sup>20</sup>

Chancellor Kent's plea made a profound impression and his forecast of the tendencies of democracy was remarkable for the time; but his arguments could do nothing to arrest the current that was running in favour of democracy. Daniel Tompkins, the president of the convention, met his arguments by an appeal to the Declaration of Independence, saying, "Property, when compared with our essential rights, is insignificant and trifling. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not of property, are set forth in the Declaration of Independence as cardinal objects. How was the late war sustained? Who filled the ranks of your armies? Not the priesthood, not the men of wealth, not the speculators. The former were preaching sedition, and the latter decrying the credit of the Government to fatten on its spoil. And yet the very men who were led on to battle had no vote to give for their commander-in-chief. We give to property too much influence. It is not that which mostly gives independence. Independence consists more in the structure of the mind and in the qualities of the heart. We should look to the protection of him who has personal security and personal liberty at stake."<sup>21</sup>

His remarks were characteristic of the idealism of the age and the growing consciousness of the value of human personality in the life of the nation. It is a far step from the times when the Constitution was formed and property placed its check upon democracy. In the interval of thirty years, the people had become conscious of their rights and the spirit in the convention bore witness to the new age and the new principles. The incarnation of this new spirit was Martin Van Buren. He brought the issue of democracy clearly before the convention. He paid a tribute to the "candour and purity" of the character of Chancellor Kent, but he characterised his fears of universal suffrage as a travesty on the real character of the people, and then he brought the question down to hard facts when he said, "By the census of 1814, it appeared that of one hundred and sixty-three thousand electors, seventy-five thousand are freeholders under two hundred and fifty dollars, and all of them householders. . . . Shall this class of men, composed of mechanics, professional men and small land-holders, be excluded entirely from all representation in that

<sup>20</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Van Buren," 1889, p. 80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

branch of the Legislature which has equal power to originate all bills, a negative on all laws, and, as a court of last resort, is intrusted with the life, liberty, and property of every one of our citizens? This is the grievance under which so great a portion of the people of this State have hitherto laboured. It is to relieve them from this injustice, and this oppression that the convention has been called.”<sup>22</sup>

He then went on to deal with the question of property and pointed out that the proposed restriction of the suffrage offered no security to property; that this was only to be found “in the order and good government of the people: and that the sense of legislators of their immediate responsibility to the people, is the best security “against agrarian laws, extravagance, and unequal taxation.” Alluding to the weight of opinion of the men of Revolution against universal suffrage, he replied, “that Constitutions develop themselves with the growing opinions of a nation.” “A full and perfect experience has proved the fallacy of the fearful forebodings of the patriots who made the Constitution; and we are now called upon to adopt the exploded notion, and on that ground to disfranchise nearly a moiety, if not a majority, of our citizens.”<sup>23</sup>

The opponents of the suffrage now changed their tactics and came out for universal suffrage in the hope that this radical clause in the Constitution would lead the electors to refuse to ratify it. Against this extension of the suffrage, Van Buren exerted all his influence and succeeded in holding the convention to the proposals made by the committee. He said, “That were the bare, naked question of universal suffrage put to the committee, he did not believe there were twenty members who would stand for it”; and he contended that the extension of the suffrage would lead to three evils: first, “It would give to the city of New York about twenty-five thousand votes; whilst, under the liberal extension of the right on the choice of delegates to this Convention, she had about thirteen or fourteen thousand. That the character of the increased number of votes would be such as would render their elections rather a curse than a blessing: which would drive from the polls all sober-minded people. Secondly, It would work an injury to the northern and western counties of the State and New York City would secure the additional representation of fourteen members. And thirdly, the door would have been entirely closed against retreat, whatever might be our after

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

conviction founded on experience, as to the evil tendency of this extended suffrage. The just equilibrium between the rights of those who have and those who have no interest in the government, could, when once thus surrendered, never be regained, except by the sword." While he pointed out that the suffrage could be limited in the future, by curtailing the objects of taxation and that "the highway tax might hereafter be confined to property, instead of imposing it, as they now do, on adult male citizens." For one hundred years at least this would afford a sufficient protection against the evils which were apprehended."<sup>24</sup>

The convention adopted the report of the committee with the restricted suffrage and the Constitution was ratified by the people. The men who framed the new Constitution and the Federalists who fought against the restricted suffrage, little appreciated the social forces under which they were acting. Jonas Platt wrote to Chancellor Kent in October, 1821, commending him for the "dignified stand which he had maintained in resisting the torrent from the volcano. I rejoice on your own account as well as for the honour of the State, that you have been stationed in the straits of Thermopylæ. You have erected there a noble monument, my dear friend; and even our ungrateful republic will one day do justice to your merits and character. You have never before been exposed to the buffeting of Jacobin factions."<sup>25</sup>

But the stand at Thermopylæ only arrested the democratic movement for a few years. Within five years an amendment was made to the Constitution which granted the suffrage to every male inhabitant who had resided in the state for one year. This change had been brought about, as Van Buren said, "by the results of experience and the progress of liberal opinion." This rapid extension of the suffrage in the face of the mature judgment against it by such a champion of the people's rights as Van Buren revealed the irresistible character of the democratic movement, foreshadowed a new step in the march of democracy. Its results were to be far-reaching and to work a political revolution in the ideas of government and the principles of legislation. The new power in the hands of the working classes was to give a new character to legislation and to bring the democracy into the places of power and position within the nation. In the elevation of Andrew Jackson, a man of the people, to the presidency, democracy found a leader and a champion of its rights.

<sup>24</sup> Holland, "Life," pp. 177-180. •

<sup>25</sup> "Memoir of Kent," p. 82.

## CHAPTER V

### DEMOCRACY BECOMES CONSCIOUS OF ITS POWER: GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

WITH the end of Monroe's administration and the election of 1824, "the era of good feeling" passed away and the electorate began to divide on party lines and to stand for distinctive principles. At first the division was caused merely over the question of office and who should be the heir of Monroe. The congressional group and the party politicians were divided over their favourite leaders and four candidates entered the field for President; namely, Adams, Crawford, Clay, and Calhoun. Adams represented the remains of Federalism united with the moderate Republicans and the mercantile forces of the North. Crawford inherited the Virginian tradition and the opposition of the South to the protective tariff. Clay stood for the buoyant and independent spirit of the Western States and his advocacy of the tariff commanded a strong following in the Northern States. Calhoun represented Southern interests and State Rights and was popular in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. In the beginning, the divergence in aims was not marked and the election seemed to turn more on personal popularity than upon principles.

But new economic and social forces were at work underneath the surface, of which the politicians took small account and which upset all their calculations. There was a spirit of unrest among the people, especially in the new democracy of the Western States and the western counties of Pennsylvania and New York which were closely allied to them by interests and ideas. This took the form of criticism of office-holders who belonged to the educated and upper classes in the East, to the exclusion of the mass of the people. The democratic spirit of the Western communities had opened all offices to the people and they were beginning to demand that the federal offices be conducted on the same principle. This demand introduced a new element into the campaign and found a leader in Andrew Jackson, the hero of New Orleans. Jackson stood for the old principles of Jeffersonian

democracy and government by the will of the majority. He had been put forward by his friends as a presidential candidate in 1822 and nominated by the legislature of Tennessee, but had not been taken seriously by the politicians. While his military fame was unquestioned, he was thought too uncouth, uneducated, and untrained in the affairs of administration to be considered seriously for the presidency. His candidacy gained a large following in the Southwestern States and the Adams managers thought that he would strengthen their ticket by being nominated as Vice-President. Adams expressed the general opinion of the time when he said, "His name and character would serve to restore the forgotten dignity of the place, and it would afford an easy and dignified retirement for his old age."<sup>1</sup>

But Jackson developed unexpected strength in the western counties of Pennsylvania where the Scotch-Irish were strong and they turned out in a body to support his candidacy and his name was nominated by acclamation by a large gathering of electors at Pittsburgh. This started a wave of enthusiasm which spread throughout the state and he was hailed as the people's candidate. This culminated in a convention held at Philadelphia where the people took the nomination out of the hands of the politicians and endorsed Jackson for President. It was a great blow to the hopes of Calhoun, who had counted on Pennsylvania as one of his states. He withdrew from the contest and entered into an alliance with the Jackson men and consented to run as Vice-President on the Jackson ticket.

With the uprising of the people and the endorsement of Pennsylvania for Jackson, his presidential boom increased daily and there were signs that New York would follow Pennsylvania, and the trend towards Jackson became more marked among the common people of the Western States. As the Southern vote was now divided between the three Southern leaders, the centre of interest in the coming election turned upon the votes of the two great middle states, Pennsylvania and New York, where democracy was strongest among the masses of the cities and the farmers of the western sections.

Adams was sure of the vote of New England and had counted upon New York until the Jackson movement began. As it turned out, Jackson carried Pennsylvania and Adams received twenty-six out of the thirty-six votes cast by New York, the remainder being divided between Crawford and Clay. No candidate received a majority of the electoral vote. Jackson received 99,

Bassett, "Life of Jackson," p. 337.



Adams 84, Crawford 41, and Clay only 37. This threw the election into the House of Representatives where the candidate receiving the majority of the votes of the states would be President. It was a time of great political excitement and the period before the election by the House was characterised by the spirit of intrigue and an effort by the politicians to effect a combination to elect their candidate. The Jackson forces claimed that their candidate had the largest electoral vote and was entitled to the election; but by a combination of the forces of Clay and Adams and an alleged understanding by which Clay was to be made Secretary of State, Adams was elected on the first ballot and received the vote of thirteen states. Jackson received seven, and Crawford four states. It was said that the vote of New York was divided and a long contest was expected; but at the last moment, Peter Van Rensselaer, who had opposed Adams, cast his vote for him and thus threw the state into the Adams column. This decision seemed to thwart the will of the people and had decisive consequences in the election of 1828. The claim that Jackson represented the majority of the people can hardly be justified by the result of the election, where many cross-currents contributed to the electoral vote of the states. While Jackson was strong in certain states, yet he had secured others only because the Adams men wanted to defeat Crawford and the election in the House had been in accordance with strict lines of the Constitution. The effect of the election, however, stirred up the people against this method of election and the common belief fomented by Benton, that the will of the people had been thwarted, increased Jackson's popularity. Benton "touched," said Sumner, "the portentous antagonism which is latent in the American system of the State—the antagonism between the democratic principle and the constitutional institution. The grandest issue that can ever arise in American political life is whether, when that antagonism is developed into active conflict, the democratic principle or the constitutional institution will prevail."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the time had come when the democratic principle was to receive a new emphasis and when the idea of the will of the people was to strain the limits of the Constitution.

Van Buren of New York, who had led the Crawford forces and who was the shrewdest politician of the time, early discerned the drift of the popular movement and foresaw that Jackson would develop the democratic strength at the next election. He therefore attached himself to the Jackson following and adopted a

<sup>2</sup> Sumner, "Life of Jackson," p. 128.

policy of opposition to the Adams administration and the national Republicans and held them up to the country as the survivors of Federalism, the advocates of a high tariff, the national bank, and national improvements. It was not unnatural, however, that Van Buren took this line as his sympathies had been from the beginning of his career with the democratic movement and he had been the leader in the constitutional convention in New York in 1821 which led to the extension of the suffrage. While differing from Jackson in the amenities of life, yet by principle and by sympathy with the aspirations of the people, he belonged in his party. Under this policy of Van Buren, the Republicans divided into two wings, the national Republicans and the Radicals who took the name of Democrats in 1826 and looked upon Jackson as their leader.

The political condition of the Western and Southwestern States favoured the growth of the Democratic party; for all had constitutions based upon universal suffrage; and in the Northern States, Pennsylvania had given the suffrage to every man who paid a county or state tax, and New York established universal suffrage in 1826. The new forces of democracy began to make themselves felt in 1827 and to change the character of the constituencies of the large cities. With the extension of the suffrage, the working classes began to emerge as a political force and to make their influence felt in the elections of the states. The attainment of their political rights awoke in them a new consciousness of their power and led to the organisation of political groups to secure legislation in the interest of their class. In 1827, this gave rise to a labour party in Philadelphia and a year later in New York. These two cities were growing with great rapidity and developing a factory population which was agitated over hours of labour and markets for their products. In 1820, the population of Philadelphia numbered 108,745 and had nearly doubled by 1830. In New York, the population increased from 123,706 in 1820 to 202,586 in 1830. With the growing political intelligence of the workingmen and with the pressure of the new economic forces, a movement began in Philadelphia to improve their condition which resulted in the formation of the Mechanics' Union of Trade Associations. This led to a strike for ten hours as a day's labour instead of the present system of from sunrise to sunset. The old system left the workers no leisure. A writer of the time describes their condition, "Scarcely time allowed them to take their scanty meals, they retire to their beds at night worn down and exhausted with excessive labour; hence they

are deprived of any privileges except working, eating, and sleeping.”<sup>3</sup>

In connection with the strike for ten hours in Philadelphia, a pamphlet was issued, setting forth the claims of the workingmen and urging them to political action in which it was said, “It is true in this favoured nation we enjoy the inestimable blessing of ‘universal suffrage,’ and constituting, as we everywhere do, a very great majority, we have the power to choose our own legislators, but this blessing can be of no further benefit to us than as we possess sufficient knowledge to make proper use of it.”<sup>4</sup>

As the movement developed and the workingmen became more conscious of their political power by their success in several of the city and state elections, they became more insistent in their demands. They urged legislation to establish public education and to provide more leisure for the workers. At the same time, the movement was characterised by an attack upon the wealthier classes and the Workmen’s Republican Political Association called attention to the division of society into “two distinct classes, the rich and the poor; the oppressor and the oppressed; those that live by their own labour, and they that live by the labour of others; the aristocratic and the democratic; the despotic and republican, who are in direct opposition to one another in their objects and pursuits.”<sup>5</sup>

In New York the workingmen’s movement started from a different source but was animated by the same principles. For some years previous to this period, two brothers by the name of Evans had come from England and had taught the workingmen the ideas and principles of the English labour movement and this had awakened a desire for a similar movement in New York, and led to the organisation of the Workmen’s party. Its principles and aims were more radical than the Workmen’s party in Philadelphia and frightened the property classes by its teachings on the agrarian law and division of wealth. The platform made twelve demands: First, the right of man to the soil, “vote yourself a farm.” Second, down with monopolies, especially the United States Bank. Third, freedom of public lands. Fourth, homesteads made inalienable. Fifth, abolition of all laws for the collection of debts. Sixth, a general bankrupt law. Seventh, a lien of the labourer upon his own work for his wages. Eighth, abolition of imprisonment for debt. Ninth, equal rights for women

<sup>3</sup> H. Sumner, “Working Man’s Advocate,” quoted by History of Labour in U. S., Vol. I, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.

with men in all respects. Tenth, abolition of chattel slavery and of wage slavery. Eleventh, land limitation to one hundred and sixty acres. Twelfth, mails in the United States to run on the Sabbath.

The first efforts of the leaders was to arouse the workingmen to take political action and the *Working Man's Advocate* appealed to them to act in the spirit of the Revolution. "Your fathers of the Revolution," it said, "secured for you a form of government which guarantees to you, almost universally, the elective franchise. If you possess the rights of free men, you have exercised them as the privilege of slaves. Awake, then, from your slumbers; and insult not the memories of the heroes of '76, by exhibiting to the world, that what they risked their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honour to obtain, you do not think worth preserving."<sup>6</sup>

They also called attention to the fact that the legislature had neglected the interests of the working classes and that they had "seen with surprise and alarm the neglect which these interests have received, and the greater consideration which had been bestowed upon the moneyed and aristocratical interests of this State" and they complained that the office-holders were confined to the richer class.<sup>7</sup>

A book was written by Stephen Simpson entitled "The Workingmen's Manual." It was dedicated to the shade of Jefferson and bore this motto, "Governments were instituted for the happiness of the many, not for the benefit of the few." The writer urged the workingmen to "press forward in the path of science and justice, under the banner of labour the source of wealth, and industry the arbiter of its distribution." He also praised Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence and condemned the feudal laws and customs which still existed in America and added, "that those who toil not live in luxury, while honest labour suffers the pangs of hunger"; and he recommended as a remedy the education of public opinion "so that labour may become respectable, for now the children of toil are as much shunned in society as if they were leprous convicts just emerged from loathsome cells."<sup>8</sup>

These radical ideas were not shared by all the workers, and the divergence of opinion led to the formation, later, of three

<sup>6</sup> H. Sumner, "Working Man's Advocate," quoted by History of Labour in U. S., Vol. I., p. 232.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>8</sup> Ely, "Labour Movement in America," pp. 41-6.

parties who by their contests neutralised the force of the workingmen's movement and its final absorption in the Democratic party which advocated many of the workingmen's proposals. At the beginning of this agitation among the working classes, the election of 1828 occurred and the workingmen in both Philadelphia and New York threw the weight of their votes on the side of Jackson and they undoubtedly had much to do in placing Pennsylvania in the Democratic column. In New York, the presidential electors were elected by congressional districts and Jackson received twenty votes and Adams sixteen. The total vote of the state was very close. Jackson received 140,763 votes to Adams' 135,413 votes. New York City went Democratic by four thousand votes and much of this majority must be conceded to the workingmen. In the country at large, Jackson received 178 electoral votes to 83 for Adams. "Adams got not a single vote south of the Potomac or west of the Alleghanies." North of the Potomac he carried Pennsylvania, twenty votes in New York, and five votes in Maryland. Benton claimed that the election of 1828 was "a triumph of democratic principle, and an assertion of the people's right to govern themselves." Jackson came into power on the crest of the wave of the uprising of the people against the moneyed aristocracy and the official bureaucracy. He was the hero of the people, expressed their aspirations, and stood for their control of their own government. Two factors were dominant in the election; first the desire of the people to share in the offices of the government; secondly, the demand to curb the money power which controlled the country through the United States Bank. The realisation of these two policies was the work of Jackson's administration, and its supporters gained the name of the Jacksonian Democracy. In his inaugural address, Jackson outlined his policy and gave expression to a new principle when he said, "As long as our Government is administered for the good of the people, and is regulated by their will; as long as it secures to us the rights of persons and property, liberty of conscience and of the press, it will be worth defending."<sup>9</sup>

It was the will of the people that he claimed must decide every question, and it was to the people that he appealed on every issue to which his opponents took exception. On the question of office-holders he was even more explicit: "The recent demonstration of public sentiment inscribes on the list of Executive duties,

<sup>9</sup> Newton Thorpe, "Statesmanship of Andrew Jackson," pp. 31-

in characters too legible to be overlooked, the task of *reform*, which will require particularly the correction of those abuses that have brought the patronage of the Federal Government into conflict with the freedom of elections. In performance of a task thus generally delineated I shall endeavour to select men whose diligence and talents will insure in their respective stations able and faithful co-operation depending for the advancement of the public service more on the integrity and zeal of the public officers than on numbers."<sup>10</sup> The definite propositions of his policies, however, were deferred until his annual message.

The scenes at the inauguration were marked by their republican simplicity and by immense crowds which had come to Washington to celebrate the hero of democracy. It was the man of the people and the choice of the people who was to be inducted into the White House and the popular enthusiasm was tremendous. "I never saw such a crowd before," writes Webster. "Persons have come five hundred miles to see General Jackson, and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from dreadful danger."<sup>11</sup>

Another witness writes, "By ten o'clock, the Avenue was crowded with carriages of every description, from the splendid Baronet and coach, down to wagons and carts, filled with women and children, some in finery and some in rags, for it was the people's President; the men all walked." Jackson walked down Pennsylvania Avenue surrounded with a small group. "All wore their hats but a tall gentleman in the middle, whose erect figure and white head were recognised as Jackson's." As the procession proceeded up the avenue towards the capitol, the crowds rushed to see him. "There, there, that is he," exclaimed some, "he with the white head." "Ah," murmured others, "there is the old man and his grey hair, here is the old veteran, there is Jackson."<sup>12</sup>

He read his inaugural address in such a low voice that few could hear him and then took the oath of office administered by Chief Justice Marshall. And taking the Bible, "he kissed it and laid it down reverently and bowed again to the people." The people, no longer to be restrained, broke through the cordon of officials and rushed up to shake his hand and to congratulate him. It was with difficulty that he got away from the crowd and, mounting his horse, returned to the White House. Soon the multitude followed him and poured into the building and created

<sup>10</sup> Newton Thorpe, "Statesmanship of Andrew Jackson," pp. 31-4.

<sup>11</sup> Basnett, "Life of Jackson," Vol. II., p. 421.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 422.

a scene of unutterable confusion in which manners and dignity were forgotten.

The first measure of Jackson's administration was the removal of the office-holders and the "reform of abuses in the federal service." With this expectation, Washington was crowded with a multitude of Democrats seeking jobs and appointments from the President. The predominant idea of the new democracy was that the people were now to have a share in the administration of the government. The principle that the victorious party should control the offices of the government had been recognised for some years in Pennsylvania and New York, and as the democracy gained power in these states, it had turned the old Federal office-holders out. Marcy had justified this procedure on the grounds that "to the victors belong the spoils," and it was received with approbation by the people. It was not unnatural that this principle should be applied to the federal service, now that the democracy had come into power. There had been little changes in the office-holders in twenty-eight years and the public service was filled with old adherents of Federalism who were members of the upper and educated classes and who by a long tenure of office had come to look upon the office as their right and even as hereditary in their families.

During the election campaign, there had been many charges of malfeasance in office and the cry was raised, "Turn the rascals out." While most of these charges were unfounded, still there were much inefficiency and irregularity in the public service which furnished the Democrats with grounds for removal. Jackson's idea of the removal of office-holders and his justification for his conduct were set forth in his first message to Congress in December, 1829. He said, "In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the people no one man has any more intrinsic right to official station than another. Offices were not established to give support to particular men at the public expense. No individual wrong is, therefore, done by removal, since neither appointment to nor continuance in office is a matter of right. The incumbent became an officer with a view to public benefits, and when these require his removal they are not to be sacrificed to private interests. It is the people, and they alone, who have a right to complain when a bad officer is substituted for a good one. He who is removed has the same means of obtaining a living that are enjoyed by the millions who never held office."

The outcry against the removals had been raised by the friends of the office-holders who had been dependent on the offices for a

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livelihood and by the political opponents who were distressed to see so many of the tried officials of the old administrations removed. Owing to the fact that the South had supported Jackson, and the office-holders in that section were Democrats, very few were removed; but in Pennsylvania, New York, and New England where the offices had been filled with adherents of Adams and the Federalists, there were extensive removals. Between the inauguration and the meeting of Congress in December, 491 postmasters and deputies had been removed in that section. "The largest number, 131, was in New York; then came New Hampshire, Isaac Hill's bailiwick, with 55, Ohio with 51, Pennsylvania with 35, Massachusetts with 28. In a few cases there had been complaints of the service."<sup>13</sup>

Great changes, however, were made in the custom-houses and among the higher officials of the government, and it was charged that Jackson had debauched the federal service. There was much exaggeration of the number of removals and the opposition of the Senate to confirmation of many of the changes, later, did much to throw discredit upon the administration. The opposition of the Senate to Jackson's policy was tempered, however, with prudence, and as Webster said, "Were it not for the fear of the outdoor popularity of General Jackson, the Senate would have negatived more than half his nominations."<sup>14</sup>

After all, the removals were not as extensive as party passion attributed to the administration. Out of 612 presidential offices, 252 were removed and among 8000 postmasters and their deputies, only 600 were changed.<sup>15</sup> These changes in office can hardly be considered a large amount by a party which had come into power with the avowed purpose of putting the people in office. The criticism was largely directed against the character and qualities of the new office-holders and the removal of many of the educated classes from the administrative affairs. The new office-holders were not always selected with regard to fitness and ability and too often the test was party loyalty.

But by these sweeping changes in office, the spirit of the new democracy was revealed and it changed the character of the administration. Hereafter, the offices were distributed not with regard to a select coterie of men of education and means, but as rewards for party services and for the support of party principles.

<sup>13</sup> Macdonald, "Jacksonian Democracy," p. 59.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Bassett, "Life of Jackson," p. 454.



During his administration, Jackson followed the principles which he had laid down in his inaugural address and his first message to Congress. His first veto was on a bill for internal improvements and the building of a national highway and it settled the question for a generation. His nullification message and his vigorous foreign policy were marked features of his administration and strengthened the cause of the Union; but his great conflict and that which called forth the militant forces of democracy was his controversy with the United States Bank and with the moneyed power of the country. The bank's charter expired in 1836 and the friends of the bank were anxious to have it renewed. Jackson believed that the charter of the bank was unconstitutional and in his first message had said: "The charter of the Bank of the United States expires in 1836, and its stockholders will most probably apply for a renewal of their privileges. . . . Both the constitutionality and the expediency of the law creating this bank are well questioned by a large portion of our fellow-citizens, and it must be admitted by all that it has failed in the great end of establishing a uniform and sound currency."

In this opinion he was but expressing the general sentiment of the people and especially those of the West and Southwest, where the facilities of the bank were not always used in the public interest and where the people feared its monopolistic power. Moreover, the bank was by its mercantile associations lined up with the opponents of the administration and in some cases had used its influence to control Congress and direct the politics of the country. Jackson's message alarmed the bank, and its president, Nicolas Biddle of Philadelphia, tried during the next two years to come to some understanding with the administration. In his second message, Jackson again alluded to the bank, saying, "Nothing has occurred to lessen in any degree the dangers which many of our citizens apprehend from that institution as at present organised. In the spirit of improvement and compromise which distinguishes our country and its institutions it becomes us to inquire whether it be not possible to secure the advantages afforded by the present bank through the agency of a Bank of the United States so modified in its principles and structure as to obviate constitutional and other objections." Owing to the negotiations which had been conducted by the bank with the President through the mediation of Livingston, there seemed some hope that the disagreements between Jackson and Biddle might be adjusted and in the President's third message he spoke in a

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more conciliatory tone in regard to the bank. But Biddle was an autocrat and handled the situation in a way to arouse Jackson's antagonism. He thought that the time was opportune to secure a renewal of the charter of the bank and worked to influence Congress through a powerful lobby. Clay, who conceived that the bank question would destroy Jackson's popularity and lead to his defeat at the polls in 1832, heartily co-operated with Biddle, with the result that a new charter of the bank was pushed through Congress, though it was known that Jackson would veto the bill. Jackson was not a man to evade an issue when it was squarely placed before him or to avoid a question, even if it led to his defeat at the elections. He met the action of Congress with a prompt veto and the issue was now joined between the friends and the opponents of the bank. In his veto message, Jackson appealed over the heads of Congress to the people and inaugurated that policy which has been followed later by many of the Presidents. He laid stress upon the unconstitutionality of the bank and the influence of its foreign stockholders, and he emphasised its monopolistic character. "It is to be regretted," he said, "that the rich and powerful too often bend the acts of government to their selfish purposes. Distinctions in society will always exist under every just government. Equality of talents, of education, or of wealth cannot be produced by human institutions. In the full enjoyment of the gifts of Heaven and the fruits of superior industry, economy, and virtue, every man is equally entitled to protection by law; but when the laws undertake to add to these natural and just advantages artificial distinctions, to grant titles, gratuities, and exclusive privileges, to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and labourers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favours to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government. . . . In the act before me there seems to be a wide and unnecessary departure from these just principles. . . . It is time to pause in our career to review our principles, and if possible revive that devoted patriotism and spirit of compromise which distinguished the sages of the Revolution and the fathers of our Union. If we can not at once, in justice to interests vested under improvident legislation, make our Government what it ought to be, we can at least take a stand against all new grants of monopolies and exclusive privileges, against any prostitution of our Government to the advancement of the few at the expense of the many, and in favour

of compromise and gradual reform in our code of laws and system of political economy.”<sup>16</sup>

The bank accepted the challenge of Jackson and made immense efforts to compass his defeat. On the one hand, the country was flooded with pamphlets and literature to show that the nation would be ruined unless a new charter was granted. On the other, the Democrats identified the bank with the money power and pointed out that its monopoly in finance would in the end dominate the people. Some of the charges made against the bank were these: 1. That its directors, especially in the branches, were appointed from political motives; there was some truth in this charge, especially in the West. 2. That of using money at the polls. 3. That of giving special favours to congressmen. While this charge was exaggerated, yet it had a basis in facts and undoubtedly influenced the action of members of Congress in favour of the bank. 4. That of maintaining a lobby to influence legislation. 5. Subsidizing the press. This was proved in one case of the *Courier and Enquirer* of New York and there were strong suspicions that other loans had been made with the same purpose. 6. Liberal circulation of pamphlets and magazines to influence public opinion which were paid by bank funds.<sup>17</sup> Biddle justified these methods as a means of enlightening the people and overcoming the “demagogues of that day” who “deceived the community.”<sup>18</sup>

There was no doubt that the bank exercised a financial monopoly in many communities and determined legislation in its own interest and by its financial power threatened the rule of the people. In the last analysis, the fight was between the moneyed aristocracy and democracy. And on this issue the election was fought. Clay, who had been nominated by the National Republicans and supported by the conservative forces of the country, went down to a signal defeat and Jackson swept the country, carrying the election by 219 electoral votes to Clay's 47. The common people, the farmers and mechanics to which Jackson appealed, rallied around his standard, and the great states of Pennsylvania and New York together with the South and West gave him unqualified support. Jackson's appeal to the mechanics and workingmen met with a hearty response. By 1832, the workmen's movement was a spent force and it had amalgamated with the Democratic party which had absorbed its members and

<sup>16</sup> Newton, “The Statesmanship of Andrew Jackson,” pp. 174-6.

<sup>17</sup> Bassett, “Life of Jackson,” pp. 622-7.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 626.

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adopted its aims and identified itself with the demand for public education, the abolition of imprisonment for debt, the workmen's lien on wages, and a reduction in the hours for a day's labour. There is no doubt that the Democratic party during the next eight years was largely a workingmen's party and favoured legislation in their interest. The agitation and discussion over the question of wealth by the working classes in Philadelphia and New York in the early thirties, redounded to the cause of Jackson and enlisted the workers on his side in his struggle with the United States Bank and the money power. They early recognised his sympathy with the cause of the people and they supported him in the election of 1832. While the new democracy had its chief support in the freer life of the great Western communities with their spirit of independence and equality, it would not at this time have won so signal a triumph had it not been for the enthusiasm which Jackson had awakened among the working classes of the large cities of the conservative East. In spite of the financial interests in these states and the strength and power of the mercantile classes who were allied with Clay and the National Republicans, the masses of the cities rallied around the man of the people and gave their votes for Jackson. From this time dates the alliance between the democracy of the Northern cities and the slave-holding aristocracy of the South which was to dominate the country for many years to come.

Jackson interpreted his re-election not only as a personal triumph, but also as a vindication of his policy against the bank, and he was ready to use all the executive power to make it effective. If Biddle had accepted defeat at the polls and allowed the bank to die at the expiration of its charter, the controversy might have ended here; but he proposed to continue the fight in the hope that public opinion might change. To meet this new move, Jackson planned to remove the government deposits from the bank and by this means to cripple its power and influence. He was obsessed with the idea that the bank might find the means to influence Congress to pass the charter over his veto. In order to carry out this policy, the President must have the co-operation of the Secretary of the Treasury. The present secretary, McLane, was a friend of the bank and opposed the idea. Therefore Jackson remodelled his cabinet and appointed Duane of Pennsylvania, the son of Duane of the old Aurora, as Secretary of the Treasury; but he did not prove as tractable as Jackson wished, so that in the end he was compelled to remove

him and this was followed by the appointment of Taney, the Attorney-General, to the vacant place.

Jackson presented a long letter, prepared by Taney, on the reasons for the removal of deposits from the bank. After rehearsing the history of the controversy with the bank and calling attention to its efforts to influence public opinion and the elections by the improper use of literature paid for by bank funds and the extension of loans in 1832, he took up the questions of its efforts to alarm the country by the ruin which would follow if the deposits were removed. "The funds of the Government," he said, "will not be annihilated by being transferred. They will immediately be issued for the benefit of trade, and if the Bank of the United States curtails its loans the State banks, strengthened by the public deposits, will extend theirs. . . . Should the Bank, for the mere purpose of producing distress, press its debtors more heavily than some of them can bear, the consequences will recoil upon itself, and in the attempts to embarrass the country it will only bring loss and ruin upon the holders of its own stock." He also emphasised the point that "higher considerations" were involved than the mere transfer of a sum of money from one bank to another. "Its decision may affect the character of our Government for ages to come. Should the bank be suffered longer to use the public moneys in the accomplishment of its purposes, with the proofs of its faithlessness and corruption before our eyes, the patriotic among our citizens will despair of success in struggling against its power, and we shall be responsible for entailing it upon our country forever. Viewing it as a question of transcendent importance, both in the principles and consequences it involves, the President could not, in justice to the responsibility which he owes to the country, refrain from pressing upon the Secretary of the Treasury his views of the considerations which impel to immediate action."<sup>19</sup> He told his cabinet "to consider the proposed measure as his own, in the support of which he shall require no one of them to make a sacrifice of opinion or principle." That Jackson felt deeply upon this question, there is no doubt. Much as he might be lacking in the knowledge of finance and the true services of the bank to the nation, his opposition was not directed against banks, but as against the bank which he held, be it said on many just grounds, had been striving to dominate the financial life of the nation. He said that his "responsibility" on this issue "has been assumed after the most mature deliberation

<sup>19</sup> Newton, "The Statesmanship of Andrew Jackson," pp. 277-80.

and reflection as necessary to preserve the morals of the people, the freedom of the press, and the purity of the elective franchise, without which all will unite in saying that the blood and treasure expended by our forefathers in the establishment of our happy system of government will have been vain and fruitless." <sup>20</sup>

Jackson ordered the deposits to be removed from the bank on October 1st.

And the cry immediately arose from his opponents and the friends of the bank that he would ruin the country and destroy all confidence and credit. They also accused him of using despotic powers and exceeding the limits imposed on the executive by the Constitution. Amid this excitement, Congress met in December, 1833, and everything pointed to a stormy session. The Democrats had a majority in the House, but a minority in the Senate. The latter were led by Clay, Webster, and Calhoun, who were determined to put a check upon the executive power of the President and restore the balance which heretofore had existed between the legislative and executive departments. On December 11th, the Senate by a vote of 23 to 18 made a demand for a copy of the paper read to the cabinet on September 18th. Jackson refused this request on the ground that "the executive is a co-ordinate and independent branch of the Government equally with the Senate." On the 26th, Clay introduced two resolutions saying that in the dismissal of Duane and the removal of the deposits, "the President has assumed the exercise of power over the treasury of the United States, not granted to him by the constitution and laws, and dangerous to the liberties of the people." <sup>21</sup>

This led to an acrimonious debate which lasted for several months. In the meantime, a fierce controversy broke out in the country which was aggravated by the distress caused by the restrictions in bank credits. Many petitions were sent to Congress, complaining of distress and depression in business and asking for relief. Even deputations waited upon the President and he referred them to Biddle, refusing to consider any measures looking to the revival of the "Mammoth of corruption."

The debate in the Senate culminated in Clay introducing two resolutions on February 5th to this effect: 1. "Resolved, That the President, in the late executive proceedings in relation to the public revenue, has assumed upon himself authority and power not conferred by the Constitution and the laws, but in derogation

<sup>20</sup> Newton, "The Statesmanship of Andrew Jackson," p. 281.

<sup>21</sup> Macdonald, "Jacksonian Democracy," p. 232.

of both." 2. "Resolved, That the reasons assigned by the Secretary of the Treasury for the removal of the money of the United States deposited in the Bank of the United States and its branches, are unsatisfactory and insufficient."

These resolutions created a bitter feeling between the partisans of the President and his opponents, but were finally carried, the first by a vote of 26 to 20; and the second, by 28 to 18.

The President met this charge of the Senate by a long protest setting forth that his action was constitutional and that it had the approval of many of the state legislatures. The protest was designed not merely for the Senate but for the people as it was written with a view to the coming elections. The Senate refused to receive the protest or inscribe it upon the minutes of the House. At the same time, their charge of the unconstitutionality of the President could not be sustained; for the Secretary of the Treasury was a minister of the President, responsible only to him alone and removable at his pleasure. By the Constitution, the President alone was responsible and the acts of his ministers were his acts. The tendency had been for some years back for the ministers to assume an individual responsibility; but Jackson restored the ministers to their true position under the Constitution and rightly assumed the responsibility. The House of Representatives showed its closer touch with the people by voting four resolutions supporting Jackson's position.

At this time the commercial crisis was at its height and the bank refused to come to the relief of the people, desiring, as it was said, to force the hand of Jackson. But an uprising of the merchants of New York forced Biddle to change his tactics and to come to the relief of the business community. In the congressional elections of 1834, the bank was again the great issue and the people sustained Jackson by large majorities. This settled the question, and the bank at the expiration of its charter in 1836 wound up its affairs and settled all its obligations with the government and later with its stock-holders and creditors. Van Buren was elected President in 1836 on the wave of enthusiasm for Jackson, and the Democratic party seemed to be destined for a long lease of power. The panic, however, of 1837 ruined his administration and its effect was charged to the financial measures of Jackson. Undoubtedly the closing of the bank led to a curtailment of credits, and the loss of government deposits and resources affected its power to help merchants in a commercial crisis; but the panic was due not so much to the action of the bank as to the over-speculation which preceded the

crisis and the world-wide reactions from the speculative mania which affected Europe as well as this country.

The campaign of obloquy and abuse to which Jackson was subjected in his controversy with the bank has obscured his true place and real service to the cause of democracy. To the upper classes, his appeal to the people seemed to be an appeal to the mob, and these classes resented asking the people to decide a question which they thought could only be decided by the intelligent and educated portion of the community. While Jackson's fears over the influence of the bank were exaggerated, yet they were not founded on mere suspicion. Enough facts have come to light to show that the bank exceeded its legitimate authority and through its corruption of the press and the use of bank funds to disseminate literature, exercised an undue influence upon the political opinion of the country.

Jackson was not wrong in his belief that the bank was a dangerous monopoly and threatened the liberties of the people. In his attack upon the bank and in his refusal to renew its charter, he prevented the growth of a moneyed and aristocratic power in the nation which undoubtedly would have checked the control of the government by the people.

The new social and economic forces in the country forced upon the President an assertion of the executive power and elevated him into the position of a tribune of the people. He was denounced for his sympathy with the people and for his advocacy of the rule of the mob; but this criticism of the upper classes showed how little they understood the democratic forces of the time and the demand of democracy for a government which should not be a rule over the people, but of the people and by the people.

In sympathy with this spirit, Jackson struck at the money power and the official aristocracy which claimed the right to control the government. To be sure, in some of his methods he was autocratic and he allowed his temper to carry him away. He lacked the urbanity and refinement which might have commended him to cultivated society and his domineering spirit antagonised many whom he might have won over to his policy. Nevertheless he had the strength and virility of the new democracy and was the incarnation of the spirit of the Western States and the new consciousness of the labouring classes in the Eastern cities. In spite of all his defects of temper, he stands out as one of the great Presidents, and his supreme work was that he restored the rule of the people; and from henceforth, for good or



ill, made the people the dominating force in the government. He established the precedent, followed later by many of the Presidents, of appealing over the heads of the Senate when a conflict arose between that more conservative body and the representatives of the people. The criticism and abuse levelled against Jackson largely came from those who had no faith in the rule of the people and the decision of the majority. They believed in a republic, but a republic in which the power was held and exercised by the educated and aristocratic portion of the nation. Jackson believed, as Lincoln after him, in the sound judgment of the common people on all questions which concerned their interests and he based his administration upon the broad basis of the people's will and the people's decision. He was the hero of democracy, because he understood democracy. He was worshipped by the people, because he incarnated their ideas. He administered the government in their interest for the general good. And for all time, he established the principle that the government exists, not for the advancement of particular classes, nor for the benefit of special interests, but for the common welfare and for all the people.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEMOCRACY ON TRIAL: THE CRISIS OF THE CIVIL WAR

WHEN Jackson retired from the presidency in 1837, democracy that he had called into life and power seemed destined to a long career of domination and supremacy; but already the seeds of disunion were planted which were later to rend it in twain and to introduce a conflict which was to threaten not only the life of democracy itself, but also the permanence of popular government. For the next twenty years, the fortunes of democracy were overshadowed by the issue of slavery; on the one side, by the rise of the slave oligarchy in the South; on the other, by the abolition movement of the North and the moral awakening of a portion of the people to the wrong of slavery. The slavery issue profoundly affected the character and principles of the Democratic party, and, in the end, subordinated the interests of the people to the oligarchy of the South. The Whig party, which won the election of 1840 by allying itself to the new democracy and by electing a man of the people, General Harrison, was arrested at the moment of victory by the death of its leader and by the assumption of office of Vice-President Tyler, a man with Southern sympathies and ideas. Thus the Whig party, which had every prospect of leading the people along national lines, was checked at the outset of its career and the power passed into the hands of the slave party which dominated the democracy. In 1844, it elected Polk President on the issue of the annexation of Texas and the extension of slave territory. This was followed by the Mexican War and the addition to the United States of the great territories of New Mexico and California. In the reaction that followed from the war and the methods of the slave oligarchy, the Whigs came again into power by the election of the popular hero of the war, General Taylor. A crisis arose on the admission of California into the Union as a free state. In the midst of the crisis, President Taylor died, and the power passed again to the Democratic party when Vice-President Fillmore became President. From this time, the issue of slavery and the conflict growing out of this issue dominated the national life.

The period between 1850 and 1860 marked a crisis in the democratic movement. It was an open question whether or not democracy would be wrecked on the issue of slavery. Had it enough inherent strength to withstand the shock of disunion, or would it give way under the steady pressure of economic and social forces which were undermining the basis of liberty? At the beginning of the conflict, it was the prevalent idea that democracy could ignore slavery and that the differences between the two sections of the country could be settled by compromise. This seemed to be the opinion of the conservative classes and the moderate men, led by Clay and Webster. Under the threat of disunion and the destruction of the spirit of nationalism, they gave way to the demands of the Southern leaders, and entered into a compromise in 1850 which they believed would conserve popular government, and finally lay to rest the differences which separated the two sections of the Union. They did not believe Calhoun when he said that all compromise was futile and that the question could only be solved by doing "justice, by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory, and to do her duty by causing the stipulations relative to fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled—to cease the agitation of the slave question, and to provide for the insertion of a provision in the Constitution, by an amendment, which will restore to the South in substance the power she possessed of protecting herself before the equilibrium between the sections was destroyed by the action of this government."<sup>1</sup>

But Calhoun was right and they were wrong. He foresaw that no concessions could stop the progress of slavery; for by its very nature, it must strive to dominate the economic life of the country and to secure its expansion in the new territories. For the moment the policy of Clay was successful and the country enjoyed a short period of rest and peace; but soon the contest began again between the principles of freedom and of slavery.

The Compromise of 1850 satisfied neither the pro-slavery men of the South nor the anti-slavery men of the North. In the elections of 1852, the conventions and platforms of both parties turned upon the Compromise of 1850. The Democrats nominated Franklin Pierce for President on the platform "that the Democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in Congress or out of it, the agitation of the Slavery question, under whatever shape or colour the attempt may be made." The Whig party met later in convention and nominated General Scott on the

<sup>1</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Seward," p. 235.

fiftieth ballot and endorsed the Compromise of 1850 and deprecated "all further agitation of the question thus settled as dangerous to our peace." The anti-slavery Whigs were repelled by the platform and gave the party but a lukewarm support, and the "Free-Soil Democracy" put up an independent candidate.

The Whigs met an overwhelming defeat at the polls and this sealed the fate of the party. From this time it began to disintegrate and the way was prepared for a new party. The immediate cause of its dissolution was the reopening of the slavery question by Douglas who introduced a bill on the organisation of the territory of Nebraska in 1853. He proposed that the states which should be carved out of this territory should decide whether they should be free or slave by the majority of the people of the territory, or on the principle of popular sovereignty. In the discussion of the bill, he went even further and declared that by the Compromise of 1850 the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was repealed and that all the national territory whether above or below the line of  $36^{\circ} 30'$  would be open to the principle of popular sovereignty and therefore to the invasion of slavery.

The significance of this bill was not at first realised and little attention was paid to the discussion by the general public. The North had rested in the security of the Compromise of 1850 and all agitation had ceased except by the abolitionists. Chase, who early saw the drift of the bill and its consequences in the extension of slavery, issued a manifesto to the independent Democrats, warning them of its danger to the country.

This was the first news that the people had of the nature of the bill and it struck the anti-slavery men at first with consternation, and then with indignation. A series of public meetings were held throughout the North which have seldom been equalled in the character and standing of the men who attended. Petitions and protests poured into Congress against the opening up again of the question of slavery. A small group of anti-slavery senators and representatives fought the measure through all its stages, among whom Seward stood forth as the leader. Speaking of the issues at stake, he said, "The slavery agitation you deprecate so much is an eternal struggle between conservatism and progress, between truth and error, between right and wrong. . . . You may legislate, and abrogate and abnegate, as you will; but there is a Superior Power that overrules all your actions, and all your refusals to act:—that overrules, I know, not only all your actions, and all your refusals to act, but all human events, to the

distant but inevitable result of the equal and universal liberty of all men." <sup>2</sup>

While these utterances of Seward clearly placed before the country the irreconcilable principles of the two sections, yet it did not stay the passage of the bill and its assent by the President. Nevertheless its passage had political consequences of a far-reaching character. The opponents of the bill in the different parties began to coalesce under the name of Anti-Nebraskans, who later under a caucus of Northern congressmen took the name of Republicans. They were composed of Whigs, Free-Soilers, and Democrats. In the national elections for Congress in 1854, the Democrats met with a severe defeat and only seven of the forty-three Democrats who voted for the Kansas-Nebraska Bill were elected; but neither party had control of the House. The Republicans, however, had a strong representation and, by 1856, all the anti-slavery parties coalesced under the Republican banner. While this new party consisted of varied elements, and differed much in its antecedents, it was united on the fundamental principle of opposition to slavery. Its strength lay in the democratic masses of the Western States and in the country districts of New England and New York.

Though the Democratic party retained its name and still dominated the masses in the large cities, it no longer represented the democracy of the North. A large portion of the democracy had been impressed with the economic importance of free lands and had been swept along in the wave of moral enthusiasm against slavery. In the Western States, the original settlers had been reinforced by the new immigrants from Europe who were opposed to slavery and believed in freedom and democracy. After the Revolution of 1848, there had been a great influx of immigrants, fleeing from the lands where the Revolution had proved a failure and they brought with them their revolutionary ideas. This was especially true of the Germans and Swedes who took up Western lands and in some degree populated the Western cities like St. Louis.

Seward called attention to the effect of this new population on the future of slavery. "The non-slaveholding States are teeming with an increase of freemen—educated, vigorous, enlightened, enterprising freemen—such freemen as neither England, nor Rome, nor even Athens ever reared. Half a million of free men from Europe annually augment that increase; . . . You may obstruct, and so turn the direction of those peaceful armies

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Seward," Vol. I, pp. 349, 358.

away from Nebraska. So long as you shall leave them room on hill or prairie, by riverside or in the mountain fastnesses, they will dispose of themselves peacefully and lawfully in the places you have left open to them; and there they will erect new States upon the free soil, to be forever maintained and defended by free arms and aggrandised by free labor.”<sup>3</sup>

But this was not true of all the immigrants. A large number driven from Ireland by famine settled in the Eastern cities, especially New York and Boston, and by their ignorance of the issues of slavery, fell under the control of the ward leaders of those cities and helped to augment the vote of the Democratic party.

The rapid increase in immigration had given rise to the American, or Know-Nothing party, which was organised as a secret organisation and whose purpose was to exclude foreign immigrants from office and to extend the period of naturalisation. They called themselves the “Sons of ’76” and the “Order of the Star-Spangled Banner” and nominated a candidate for the presidency in 1856. The Republicans nominated John Frémont, whose exploits in the Rocky Mountains had made him popular, and the Democrats nominated Buchanan of Pennsylvania. The campaign was waged with much vigour and enthusiasm and the Republicans polled a remarkable vote, but were not able to overcome the combined vote of the Democratic party of the North and South. The Republicans carried New York with a plurality of 80,000 together with the New England States,—Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa. On the whole it was a great victory for the new party and foreshadowed a later triumph. It was evident that the democracy of the North was now divided on the principle of the extension of slavery. The old stronghold of democracy in the West had gone over to the new Republican party and the farmers were beginning to understand the importance of holding the new lands for free labour.

The Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court at the end of 1857 served to add fuel to the slavery agitation. This was aggravated by the debates in Congress, growing out of the admission of Kansas as a slave state under the Lecompton Constitution. This constitution had been adopted by fraud and against the opinion of the legal voters of the territory. Douglas assailed it as a violation of the principle of popular sovereignty and united with the Republicans to defeat the measure. With this action in Congress the agitation died down, except for a minority of the

<sup>3</sup> Bancroft, “Life of Seward,” Vol. I, 350.

pro-slavery men in the South and of the radicals in the North. The mass of the people were more or less indifferent to the issue of slavery and were anxious for peace and quietness. They did not as yet realise the tremendous issues involved in the controversy and the danger to popular government.

In 1858, the conflict entered upon a new phase in the Lincoln and Douglas debates in Illinois over the contest for the senatorship. This debate attracted the attention of the whole country and brought Lincoln forward as a national figure in politics. While he was defeated in the contest for the senatorship, yet he clearly formulated the principles of the Republican party and gave a new impulse to the democratic movement. In the course of the debate, he had given expression to views which afterwards became famous. "We are now far into the fifth year since a policy was initiated with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to Slavery agitation. Under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented. In my opinion it will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. 'A house divided against itself cannot stand.' I believe this Government cannot permanently endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

This prophetic utterance produced a sensation for the moment, but it was soon discounted and looked upon as merely the opinion of a Western lawyer. At the same time, it marked a new stage in the extension of the democratic movement. It lifted the issue above the question of the extension of slavery in the territories, and showed its relation to the larger question of freedom and popular government.

The raising of the issue in this form had not only immense consequences for the personal fortunes of Lincoln, but also for the future of the Republican party when the trend of events brought it into power in 1860 and confronted it with the war for the Union. The immediate consequences of the debate was to divide the Democratic party and to alienate Douglas from the extreme pro-slavery men of the South. It was during this period that Seward let fall an expression which created much more

excitement than that of Lincoln. In a speech at Rochester in October, he had said: "It is an irrepressible conflict between the opposing and enduring forces and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation."<sup>4</sup>

This saying produced a great outcry in the Democratic press and Seward was denounced on all sides for his revolutionary speech. The *New York Herald* called him the "arch agitator" and said that he was a more dangerous abolitionist than Beecher, Garrison, or Parker. While the speech inflamed the minds of the South and made them more bitter in their hatred of the North, yet it served to increase the gains of the Republican party.

In view of the demoralisation and division of the Democratic party, all the signs now pointed to the triumph of the Republicans in 1860. During the next two years, the debates in Congress became more bitter and party passion rose higher. This was further increased by John Brown's raid in 1859, and though its purpose was condemned, the heroism and faith of Brown made a profound impression in the North and aroused a fierce spirit of denunciation in the South. It was in the midst of these fierce passions and recriminations growing out of slavery, that the campaign of 1860 opened. The steady growth of the Republican party, the rising passion and moral enthusiasm of the North, the increasing realisation that the issue of slavery was bound up with the permanence of free government, the spread of democratic principles and the idea that "all men are equal," all combined to make the political campaign one of unusual importance.

After the debates of 1858, the friends of Lincoln recognised his availability as a presidential candidate and began to lay plans to bring him more prominently before the people. As he was unknown in the East, it was arranged that he should deliver a series of addresses in Eastern cities. His most notable address was delivered in Cooper Union, in February, 1860. He spoke to a cultured audience and the leading men of New York City. Repelling the charges against the black Republicans that they favoured John Brown and desired a slave insurrection, he called attention to the inevitable result of the slavery propaganda in destroying freedom of opinion in press and pulpit and in tending to pull down our free state constitutions and in demanding that the North say that slavery is right and that "all words, acts, laws, and constitutions against it are themselves wrong, and should be silenced and swept away." Lincoln closed with these words:

<sup>4</sup> Bancroft, "Life of Seward," Vol. I, p. 460.



"Neither let us be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us dare to do our duty as we understand it."

While the address made a great impression upon those who heard it and was read with interest, yet it did not change the general attitude of the East towards Lincoln. Seward was still looked upon as the logical candidate for the presidency and as the champion of freedom whose battle he had been fighting for years. Lincoln's campaign, however, had been carefully prepared by his managers. He had secured the delegates of his own state, Illinois, and at the state convention, his nomination had been helped by this novel incident: John Hanks and another pioneer had marched into the hall, bearing on their shoulders two long fence rails labelled: "Two rails from a lot made by Abraham Lincoln and John Hanks in the Sagamon Bottom in the year 1830." "Gentlemen," said Lincoln in response to loud calls, "I suppose you want to know something about those things. Well, the truth is, John Hanks and I did make rails in the Sagamon Bottom. I don't know whether we made those rails or not; the fact is, I don't think they are a credit to the makers. But I do know this: I made rails then, and I think I could make better ones than these now."<sup>5</sup>

In many ways this fact was to play a large part in the campaign. It was staged to appeal to the common people and Lincoln was heralded as a man who had come up from the people and who represented their interests and their ideas.

At the Democratic convention held at Charleston in April, 1860, the secessionist element had withdrawn from the convention because of their objections to the platform and their antipathy to Douglas, and the convention adjourned to meet at Baltimore in June. In view of this division and the threatening aspect of the Southern States, it was important that a man should be nominated by the Republicans who would stand not only for Republican principles, but also be free from all tendencies towards what moderate men called fanaticism. Many of the delegates distrusted Seward for his radical views and they recalled his saying on the "irrepressible conflict," and feared that his nomination would antagonise many moderate men. Lincoln was looked upon as moderate in his views, and from every standpoint seemed the most "available" candidate. On the first

<sup>5</sup> Charnwood, "Life of Lincoln," p. 166.

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ballot, Seward was far ahead of all his competitors, but Lincoln soon developed strength and was nominated on the third ballot. The nomination of Lincoln was a distinct disappointment to the Eastern Republicans and the friends of Seward and the influential and commercial classes. Men doubted his capacity for the presidency and looked upon him as a country lawyer from the West. It was with some foreboding that the Republicans entered upon the campaign and undoubtedly many were not enthusiastic for their candidate. Nevertheless it was an exciting political campaign and every effort was made by the Democrats to alarm the Republican voters by playing upon their fears by emphasising the danger of disunion, if Lincoln should be elected. In spite of this campaign of fear, of the antagonism of the conservative and wealthy men of the Eastern cities, and of the opposition of moderate men who deprecated extreme views, the democracy swept the Northern States. Lincoln carried all these states, secured three out of the seven electoral votes of New Jersey, and received in the electoral college 180 votes to 123 for all the other candidates. In spite of this he was elected by only a minority of the people. An analysis of the popular vote reveals two facts: first, that if the Democrats had been united they would have elected their candidate; second, that excluding the vote of the Slave States, Lincoln did not receive even a majority of the popular vote.<sup>6</sup>

These facts had to be taken into consideration by the Republican leaders when they viewed the popular support which would be behind Lincoln's administration. The democracy was divided and the Democrats would not support coercion of the Southern States or a war in the interest of the abolition of slavery. Moreover, the influence of the mercantile classes and the wealthy men of New York and Philadelphia was against any struggle with the south and, as Greeley said, looked "with painful apprehension" on Lincoln's election. Indeed when the fact was known, it struck them with consternation and almost created a panic. They now exerted their influence to bring about a compromise with the South and to concede to all Southern demands. This spirit was widespread in the North and created a crisis for popular government. Had it succeeded, it would have been a severe

<sup>6</sup>"The total popular vote was 4,680,193. Lincoln had 1,866,452. The total vote of the Southern States, which threw no vote for the Lincoln ticket, was 854,775; deducting this from the total vote leaves a balance of 3,825,418; of which one-half is 1,912,709; so that even outside of the states of the Confederacy, Lincoln did not get one-half of the popular vote."—Morse, "Life of Lincoln," Vol. I, p. 179.

check for the democratic movement. The first effect of the threat of secession by the Southern States was to give rise to a period of demoralisation which continued until the inauguration of Lincoln. Its public manifestation was made by Greeley in the *New York Tribune*, who, on November 9th, advocated that the Southern States be allowed to peacefully withdraw from the Union, and in this idea he was supported by many radical Republicans. "We hold," he said, "with Jefferson, to the inalienable right of communities to alter or abolish forms of government that have become oppressive or injurious; and if the Cotton States shall decide that they can do better out of the Union than in it, we insist on letting them go in peace."<sup>7</sup>

At the end of November, Thurlow Weed in his paper, the *Albany Evening Journal*, called attention to the imminent danger of the dissolution of the Union which had originated from the ambition and cupidity of men who desired a Southern despotism; and in the fanatic zeal of Northern abolitionists, who seek the emancipation of slaves regardless of consequences, and he advocated calling a convention of the people to revise the Constitution and adjust the claims between the North and the South. He thought that the North should make "concessions to avert the evils of civil war and to prevent the destruction of our, hitherto, unexampled blessings of Union." "Many suppose that the North has nothing to lose by a division of the Union. But it is a mistake—a serious and expensive mistake. The North and the South were wisely and by a good Providence united. Their interests, their welfare, their happiness, their glory, their destiny, is one. Separated, while the North languishes, the South becomes, first, a despotism, running riot, for a season, with unrestrained African Slavery, to share in time the fate of every tropical nation, whether despotism, monarchy, or republic. That fate, induced by the indolence, luxury, and laxity of the privileged few over the oppressed, degraded, and enslaved many, is anarchy and destruction."<sup>8</sup>

While Weed disclaimed any opinion but his own, his close relations with Seward and his position as the leader of the Republican party in New York gave his statement much weight. On December 3d Congress met and President Buchanan increased the alarm and demoralisation by stating that the Constitution delegated to Congress no power to coerce into submission a state which is attempting to withdraw from the Confederacy. The announced

<sup>7</sup> Greeley, "American Conflict," Vol. I, p. 359.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

policy of the President greatly intensified the spirit of compromise and the demand for concessions. At a meeting called by the Mayor of Philadelphia on December 11th in Independence Square and attended by a large body of influential citizens, this spirit found expression in the statement by the mayor, who said: "The misplaced teachings of the pulpit, the unwise rhapsodies of the lecture-room, the exciting appeals of the press, on the subject of Slavery, must be frowned down by a just and law-abiding people. (Great applause.) Thus, and thus only, may you hope to avoid the sectional discord, agitation, and animosity which, at frequently recurring periods, have shaken your political fabric to its centre, and, at last, have undermined its very foundation."<sup>9</sup> The meeting closed by adopting four resolutions: first, that all legislation which invades the constitutional rights of a sister state be repealed; second, the cheerful enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law; third, the recognition of slaves as property and the rights of slave-holders in the territories; fourth, "That all denunciations of Slavery, as existing in the United States, and of our fellow-citizens who maintain that institution, and who hold slaves under it, are inconsistent with the spirit of brotherhood and kindness which ought to animate all who live under and profess to support the Constitution of the American Union."<sup>10</sup>

In Congress the demand for compromise was expressed in the famous Crittenden Resolutions and included the recognition of slavery south of the line 36° 36'; the transportation of slaves anywhere in the Union; stricter enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law; the prohibition of any amendment to the Constitution giving power to Congress to abolish or interfere with slavery in any of the states; and the removing of popular discontent and agitation. These resolutions led to a long debate and undoubtedly would have been passed by the conservative and Democratic politicians, if the representatives of the seceding states had remained in Congress. This would have been done in spite of the fact that the resolutions violated all the principles of the Republican party. Indeed, in the present temper of the North, dominated by the spirit of conciliation, any compromise would have been acceptable to the majority of the people which preserved the Union. The demand for compromise rose higher when South Carolina seceded on December 20th, and at the beginning of the new year, the alarm and fear of civil war became more intense as Southern state after state followed the

<sup>9</sup> Greeley, "American Conflict," Vol. I, p. 363.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

example of South Carolina. Men who had been staunch anti-slavery men now were ready to sacrifice their principles for the sake of peace and the Union. Seward was carried away by the general spirit and introduced into the Senate a series of resolutions, looking towards compromise and sacrificing Republican principles. A few days after his address, he wrote, "Madmen North and madmen South are working together to produce a dissolution of the Union by civil war. The present Administration and the incoming one unite in devolving on me the responsibility of averting those disasters. My own party trusts me, but not without reservation. All other parties, North and South, cast themselves upon me." <sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly Seward classed as madmen Sumner, Wade, and their following who were opposed to all compromise; and Sumner expressed the general opinion of his group when he wrote a few days after Seward's address, "This is a trying ordeal. History will protect the men who now stand firm. No compromise will now hold. Mr. Lincoln is perfectly firm. He says that the Republican party shall not with his assent become 'a mere sucked egg, all shell and no meat, the principle all sucked out.' Pray keep our friends at Albany firm, firm, firm—not 'a pepper corn.' " <sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless the wavering of politicians and the readiness of many Republicans to consider measures of compromise had more behind it than that of merely conciliating the South. There is evidence that both Seward and Charles Francis Adams were actuated by motives of temporising with the South with a view of checking the outbreak of civil war before the Republican administration was established at Washington.

While the discussion over a compromise had been successful in restraining precipitate action by the South, yet it had left behind it as a legacy that the issue, if civil war should break out, would not be so much slavery as the preservation of the Union. Far-seeing men recognised that in the division of public opinion in the North and in the minority which formed the Republican party, the only means of uniting the people around Lincoln's administration was to emphasise the Union and the security of popular government. Amid all these trepidations, fears, and discussions, Lincoln preserved a discreet silence and refused to be drawn out or to give any opinion other than he had expressed in the campaign. He was calmly considering the whole situa-

<sup>11</sup> Pierce, "Memoirs of Sumner," Vol. IV, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

tion and maturing his plans and policy in the event of civil war. He saw more quickly than most of the statesmen of the time that if a war should ensue, it must be fought, not on the basis of slavery, but on the principle of Union and Democracy.

In his inaugural address, he was firm but conciliatory in his determination to uphold the Union and, at the same, he stated the Republican principles in their attitude towards slavery. He expressed the desire of the administration to keep within the limits of the Constitution and laid stress upon majority rule as the ultimate decision on all questions at issue and the supremacy of the people over the government. "The chief magistrate derives all his authority from the people, and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the States. Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?" He closed his address with an appeal for peace, saying, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."<sup>13</sup>

But when Fort Sumter had been fired upon and the North had risen as one man in defence of the Union, Lincoln clearly formulated the principles on which the war would be fought. In his message to Congress in July, 1861, he said: "This issue embraces more than the fate of these United States. It presents to the whole family of man the question whether a constitutional republic or democracy—a government of the people by the same people—can or cannot maintain its territorial integrity against its own domestic foes. It presents the question whether discontented individuals, too few in numbers to control administration according to organic law in any case, can always, upon the pretences made in this case, or on any other pretences, or arbitrarily without any pretence, break up their government, and thus put an end to free government upon the earth. It forces us to ask: Is there in all republics this inherent and fatal weakness? Must a government, of necessity, be too strong for the liberties of its own people, or too weak to maintain its own existence?"

"Our adversaries have adopted some declarations of independence in which unlike the good old one, penned by Jefferson,

<sup>13</sup> Lincoln, first inaugural.

they omit the words, 'all men are created equal.' Why? They have adopted a temporary national constitution, in the preamble of which, unlike the old one, signed by Washington, they omit, 'We, the People,' and substitute, 'We the deputies of the sovereign and independent States.' Why? Why this deliberate pressing out of view the rights of man and the authority of the people? This is essentially a people's contest. On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men—to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths for laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start, and a fair chance in the race of life."<sup>14</sup>

From this view of the supreme issue of the conflict, Lincoln ever refused to be swerved. In his message to Congress in the following December, he again stated the issue of the war with a new emphasis upon its relation to popular government. "It continues to develop," he said, "that the insurrection is largely, if not exclusively, a war upon the first principle of popular government—the rights of the people." He pointed out that the issue of public documents by the Southern leaders indicated "an abridgement of the existing right of suffrage and the denial to the people of all right to participate in the selection of public officers," and that these documents showed a desire to "prove that large control of the people in government is the source of all political evil. Monarchy itself is sometimes hinted at as a possible refuge from the power of the people."<sup>15</sup>

The outstanding fact in all Lincoln's career was his fervent belief in democracy and his faith in the common people to see the great interests at stake and to bring the war to a triumphant conclusion. As the war progressed, his conviction that the fight for the Union was identical with the fight for popular government deepened. Even when he began to consider the advisability of introducing the issue of slavery into the struggle he looked at the abolition of slavery as a war measure and as a means of strengthening the cause of the Union. It is this that explains his Border State policy for which he was so severely criticised by the radical Republicans. In August, 1862, Greeley wrote his public letter to the President, entitled, "The Prayer of Twenty Millions," in which he said, "That all attempts to put down the Rebellion, and at the same time uphold its inciting cause, are preposterous and futile—that the Rebellion, if crushed out to-morrow, would be

<sup>14</sup> "Writings of Lincoln," Vol. V, pp. 323-36.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 405-6.

renewed within a year if Slavery were left in full vigor." Lincoln immediately issued his famous reply: "As to the policy I 'seem to be pursuing,' as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt. I would save the Union. I would save it in the shortest way under the Constitution. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save Slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy Slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy Slavery."<sup>16</sup>

In his reply about this time to the large deputation of ministers from Chicago who urged him to issue an Emancipation Proclamation, he said, "I think you should admit that we already have an important principle to rally and unite the people, in the fact that constitutional government is at stake. This is a fundamental idea, going down about as deep as anything."<sup>17</sup> When later in the year, September, Lincoln did issue the Emancipation Proclamation, he did it as a war measure, and not because he had changed his views on the fundamental issue. Undoubtedly he was influenced in this action more by its effect on foreign opinion than on domestic sentiment. He doubted the efficacy of the measure in strengthening the forces of the North supporting the war; and the elections of 1862, which went against the administration, sustained the correctness of his judgment. Then the cry was raised by the opposition of the "perversion of the War for the Union into a War for the Negro." It was only very gradually that Union sentiment came around to support the President in his Emancipation Proclamation; but however that might be, it is significant that Lincoln always held to his first interpretation of the meaning of the conflict. Later in 1863, when he went to Gettysburg to dedicate the field of battle, he uttered the memorable words in which he summed up the principles for which the Union army was fighting and stated the cause for which they must still continue to fight: "It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and

<sup>16</sup> Gregley, "American Conflict," Vol. II, pp. 249-52.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Lincoln did not under-estimate the importance of slavery in the conflict, but he saw deeper than most of his contemporaries that a more fundamental principle underlay the struggle; that human liberty and popular government were at stake; that, if these triumphed, slavery would go down before the forces of democracy. In the great crisis of the war, he kept this aspect of the struggle to the front and by his devotion to the cause of popular government, he established democracy on an enduring and permanent foundation.

The second crisis of democracy arose over the relations between the federal government and the aristocracy and British Government. At almost any period during the Civil War, the intervention of England in favour of the South would have destroyed the Union and overthrown popular government. The breaking out of the Civil War had affected adversely the commercial relations of England; for she was dependent upon the South to supply her manufacturers with cotton and to keep her people employed. Moreover, as the South was an advocate of free trade and opposed to the protective tariff, it offered a large market for English manufactured goods, and these facts operated to align the commercial and manufacturing classes in sympathy with the South. But the sympathy of England with the Southern cause did not rest mainly on economic relations. Motley, who was in England at the beginning of the war, early discerned the true bias of the opposition of the governing classes in England to the North. After the battle of Bull Run, he wrote, "The real secret of the exultation which manifests itself in the *Times* and other organs over our troubles and disasters, is their hatred, not to America so much as to democracy in England."<sup>18</sup> Instinctively the aristocracy recognised that the rise of a Slave State in America and the severance of the Union would strengthen their position and result in a severe check to the rising democracy in England which threatened to overthrow their power. At this time it was a common saying among the aristocracy that the "Republican bubble has burst."

In September, 1861, John Bright, in a letter to Charles Sumner, clearly set forth the causes of the opposition of England and France to the North. He emphasized the effect of the tariff, the want of cotton and consequent unemployment, but he laid

<sup>18</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 304.

most stress on the antagonism of the aristocracy to democracy. He pointed out the satisfaction they derived from trouble in the American republic and the possibility of its division into two rival nations. He saw in the struggle not alone a contest over slavery, but a struggle to preserve the institutions of free government. He denounced the South for seeking "to overthrow the most free Government and the noblest constitution the world has ever seen, and in wishing 'to decree the perpetual bondage of many millions of human beings.'"<sup>19</sup>

At this time Bright was the champion of the cause of democracy in England, and he was the one man who clearly saw the issues at stake in the struggle in America and its effect upon the cause of reform and the extension of the suffrage in England. He watched with growing concern the progress of the Union armies and their early defeats which produced jubilation among the aristocracy, but only filled him with alarm and foreboding. More than any other statesman of his time, he realised the great issues for humanity at stake in the civil conflict in America and he bent all his energies to hold the English people firm in their sympathy and loyalty to the North. At no time in his public career did he render greater service to the cause of democracy and it was his staunch faith in the ultimate triumph of the North which restrained his countrymen from committing a blunder which would have been disastrous to both countries.

The opposition of the aristocracy early manifested itself in the issuing of the Neutrality Proclamation in May, 1861, which recognised the Confederate States as belligerent. This caused much feeling in the North and led to a diplomatic protest. The efforts of Lincoln's administration to treat the war as an insurrection and to hold privateers of the South as pirates broke down in the early stages of the war, and after the disaster of Bull Run, the federal government was forced to alter its policy and to recognise the belligerent rights of the South. The controversy between the American and British governments over neutral and belligerent rights during the next six months was a source of grave danger to the Union cause and at any moment might have led to a rupture of friendly relations. It was one of the critical periods of the war. These relations were strained to the breaking-point over the *Trent* affair. This arose over the action of Captain Wilkes of the naval sloop, *San Jacinto*, who stopped on the high seas the British merchantman, the *Trent*, with a neutral destination, and seized the Confederate commissioners, Mason and

<sup>19</sup> "Letters. Mass. Historical Society," Vol. XLVI, p. 96.

Slidell, and carried them to Norfolk where they were cast into prison. When the news reached America, it was hailed with enthusiasm and Wilkes was the hero of the hour. Three weeks later the news arrived in England and produced an outburst of popular indignation and the demand for the freedom of the captives and reparations. Bright wrote of this event, "This has made a great sensation here, and the ignorant and passionate and 'Rule Britannia' class are angry and insolent as usual."<sup>20</sup>

Bright was very much disturbed by the prospects of war and its effect upon the Union cause and he wrote a series of letters to Sumner in which he advocated moderation by the American Government. On December 5th, he wrote: "It is common here to say that your Government cannot resist the mob violence by which it is surrounded. I do not believe this, and I know that our Government is often driven along by the force of the genteel and aristocratic mob which it mainly represents. But now in this crisis I fervently hope that you may act firmly and courteously. Any moderate course you may take will meet with great support here, and in the English Cabinet there are, as I certainly know, some who will gladly accept any fair proposition for friendly arrangement from your side."<sup>21</sup>

Again on December 7th, he wrote to Sumner, emphasising the settlement of the dispute in the interest of freedom and popular government. "At all hazards you must not let this matter grow to a war with England, even if you are right and we are wrong. War will be fatal to your idea of restoring the Union and we know not what may survive its evil influences. I am not now considering its effects here—they may be serious enough, but I am looking alone to your great country, the hope of freedom and humanity, and I implore you not on any feeling that nothing can be conceded, and that England is arrogant and seeking a quarrel, to play the game of every enemy of your country. . . . Your Congress meets, I think, on Monday; I pray that in your Senate, in the Committee over which you preside, and in your Cabinet councils, and in the breast of your President there may be the calm wisdom which will baffle those seeking to force you into war with England—England, just now endangered by the power of her oligarchy and her overgrown military services."<sup>22</sup>

Bright's letters played no mean part in the settlement which was reached. Sumner showed them to the President and they

<sup>20</sup> "Letters. Mass. Historical Society," Vol. XLV, p. 148.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XLV, p. 53.

revealed to him the real state of English opinion and the true animus of the opposition of the British Government. Lincoln decided to give up the commissioners and this ended the *Trent* incident; but this adjustment did not serve to destroy the antagonism of the British Government or of the aristocratic classes towards the Union and the North. They were content to wait until the famine of cotton, the closing down of English factories, and the consequent unemployment would lead the masses to support the government in its opposition. While the great efforts that the North was making in equipping the army of McClellan for an offensive in the spring tempered the tone of the aristocracy, this moderation did not deceive Bright as to its true animosity. At the beginning of 1862, he wrote to Joseph Lyman, "There is, as you doubtless know, no friendly feeling on the part of our ruling class towards your *democratic* government, and no wish to see your republic united and powerful as heretofore. I am, therefore anxious that no pretext should be given by your government for any interference from Europe. The more effective the blockade, the more difficult will it be for them to interfere." <sup>23</sup>

During the *Trent* affair, Bright made his first speech in favour of the North and entered upon the campaign to educate the middle and working classes in the underlying principles of the American conflict. At the close of his speech, he said, "There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States. There may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross or calumny the most wicked can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic." <sup>24</sup>

While his speech was well received by the people to whom he spoke, it contributed little to stem the torrent of opinion which was sweeping the upper classes in favour of intervention for the South. The disastrous results from the failure of McClellan's campaign in Virginia in the early summer of 1862 accelerated this movement. This disaster combined with the success of the Southern armies, the famine in cotton, and the starvation of the English workingmen brought nearer the time when the English Government could intervene and recognise the Confederacy, and by this action, destroy the great experiment in popular govern-

<sup>23</sup> "Letters. Mass. Historical Society," Vol. XLVI, p. 101.

<sup>24</sup> Bright, "American Question," p. 66.

ment. That this purpose was defeated was due to two causes: first, to the work of John Bright in enlightening the middle and working classes as to the true nature of the conflict; second, in the heroism of the working classes of England in submitting to starvation rather than to sacrifice their principles of freedom. The indirect effect of the influence of Bright upon the outcome of the civil conflict in America cannot be over-estimated. Seeing the real nature of the struggle and the issues involved, he co-operated with the leaders in America to keep the issues before the British people and he early discerned the part that slavery would play at the decisive moment of the struggle, by changing English public opinion and by placing the masses in opposition to the British Government. Thus early in 1862, he wrote to Sumner, "I observe that the slavery question moves very slowly. Would it not be possible to have confidential friends of the Government employed amongst the leading men of the States of Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland, and show them what a deliverance it would be for them to make their States free under a moderate and guaranteed compensation, and thus to induce them to initiate the proceedings which would be acceptable to Government and Congress at Washington? It will be a great misfortune for America and for the world, if you pay this frightful penalty for your past toleration of slavery, as your sufferings thro' this war may be called, and yet should in any way terminate the struggle without having in some way terminated, if not the existence, the power and permanence of the monster evil."<sup>25</sup>

Whether it was at the suggestion of Bright or not, Lincoln made the proposition to Congress at this time of compensation for slaves in the Border States, but Congress refused to act on his suggestion. Public opinion was not yet ripe for this action, and forcing the issue of slavery into the war at this time would have weakened the sentiment behind the administration. However, as the "crisis of recognition" approached in England, the abolition of slavery as a war measure was being seriously considered by Lincoln and undoubtedly was hastened by the effect that it would have on English public opinion. The crisis came to a head when the Union army was defeated at the second battle of Bull Run and Lee made his first invasion of Maryland. It was at this time that Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell came to the decision that the time had come for England, in conjunction with France, to intervene, raise the blockade, and recognise the Confederacy. A cabinet meeting had been called for October 25th to consider

<sup>25</sup> Mass. Historical Society, Vol. XLVI, p. 104.

this question; but in the interval Gladstone "overshot the mark" by saying in the course of his speech at Newcastle, on October 7th, "There is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either,—they have made a nation. . . . We may anticipate with certainty the success of the Southern States so far as regards their separation from the North. I cannot but believe that that event is as certain as any event yet future and contingent can be." <sup>26</sup>

But when Gladstone said this, Lincoln had issued his Emancipation Proclamation on September 22d, to take effect on January 1, 1863. Whether or not it was the division of the cabinet which stayed the hand of the British Government as Charles Francis Adams, the ambassador, intimates, the effect of the Proclamation was to rally to the side of the North the great sentiment of the middle and working classes of England. Blind to the trend of events and deaf to the voice of the great body of the nation, the upper classes hailed the Emancipation Proclamation with scorn and the great London journals poured contempt upon Lincoln. From this time the rising tide of working-class opinion began to make itself felt and large meetings were held in the industrial centres. Two meetings held simultaneously in London and Manchester on December 31st gave expression to their views, and in both meetings, resolutions were passed and sent to President Lincoln, assuring him of the support of the working classes of England. They now saw that the conflict in America was their struggle and that its success or failure would react upon English freedom and liberty. To Lincoln, the London workingmen wrote, "We rejoice, Sir, in your election to the Presidency, as a splendid proof that the principle of universal freedom and equality were rising to the ascendent. We regarded with abhorrence the conspiracy and rebellion by which it was sought at once to overthrow the supremacy of a government based upon the most popular suffrage in the world, and to perpetuate the hateful inequalities of race. We have ever heard with indignation the slander that ascribed to England sympathy with a rebellion of slaveholders, and all proposals to recognise in friendship a confederacy that boasts of slavery as its corner-stone."

But greater in its influence and more far-reaching in its effects was the monster meeting of the workingmen in St. James' Hall, London, on March 26, 1863. Bright presided over the meeting

<sup>26</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 79, and "Life of Charles Francis Adams," p. 291.

and made a speech in which he clearly stated the great issues of the war. Amid tremendous cheering in marked contrast to the cheering at Newcastle six months before when Gladstone said that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, Bright spoke these fateful words: "In our day, then, that which the statesmen of America had hoped permanently to postpone has arrived. The great trial is now going on in the sight of the world, and the verdict upon this great question must at last be rendered. But how much is at stake? Some men in this country, some writers, treat it as if, after all, it was no great matter that had caused this contest in the United States. I say that a whole continent is at stake. It is not a question of boundary; it is not a question of tariff; it is not a question of supremacy of party, or even of the condition of four millions of negroes. It is more than that. It is a question of a whole continent, with its teeming millions, and what shall be their present and their future fate. It is for these millions, freedom or slavery, education or ignorance, light or darkness, Christian morality, ever widening and all-blessing in its influence, or an overshadowing and all-blasting guilt."

And then turning to the workingmen and pointing out the effect of the great conflict in America upon their future. "I wish you to be true to yourselves. . . . You wish the freedom of your country. You wish it for yourselves. You strive for it in many ways. Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen, and do not, I beseech you, bring down a curse upon your cause which no after penitence can ever lift from it. (Cheers.) You will not do this. (Cries of Never!) I have faith in you. Impartial history will tell that, when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press—which ought to have instructed and defended—was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its vast population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in his infinite mercy will yet make it the heritage of all his children."<sup>27</sup> (Loud cheers.)

<sup>27</sup> Bright, "American Question," p. 174.

## CHAPTER VII

### TREND OF DEMOCRACY: SOCIAL LEGISLATION

THE Civil War determined that the Government of the People "should not perish from the earth"; but just what direction this government would take and along what lines it would develop, was hidden in the future. There have been signs in the course of the extension of democracy that it would be a government concerned with the general welfare of the people and dominated with the idea of the common good. Nevertheless there was as yet no clear consciousness of what this involved or how it would be realised. The nation was still under the sway of the competitive principle and believed in leaving the development of the national resources to individual initiative and energy. The aftermath of the Civil War had brought to light its own problems, and the government was too concerned with questions of Reconstruction and consolidating the freedom of the former slaves to give much time to questions of the general welfare. Moreover, the war had been followed by a great expansion of business, leading to the organisation of large manufactories and the aggregation of the workers in huge establishments. A marked feature of the time was the enormous construction of new railways in the Western States and bringing the distant and undeveloped country into touch with commerce and civilisation. Under this growing expansion of business, labour was everywhere employed and the million soldiers dismissed from the Union armies were absorbed in industry. But this national development led to changes in economic conditions which gave rise to new problems in government and awakened new demands for legislation in the interest of the people. There were many signs that economic and social forces were preparing the way for a new advance of democracy and the application of its principles to the social life of the people. The leaders in politics and industry, however, did not discern the signs of the times. They had no understanding of the new forces developing among the people, or what the radical changes in the spirit of government portended. The period between 1865 and 1885 was characterised by a



growing consciousness among the workingmen and the plain people of the importance of political action to affect and improve their social condition. In this period we can discern two movements in the political field which prepared the way for a fresh effort to realise a government for the people. The first movement was among the workingmen and took the form of organising labour along national lines. As early as 1866, the National Labour Union was formed with two distinct purposes: to secure an eight-hour day, and to urge the government to continue the use of greenbacks as legal tender. To these ends were joined some socialistic ideas which had been imported from abroad and advocated by foreign workers who were disciples of Marx and Lassalle. The movement had a strong support among the workers of the large cities of the East and Chicago in the West.

In 1868 at a convention at Baltimore, the union issued a Declaration of Principles modelled after the Declaration of Independence in which it declared "that the law creating the so-called national banking system was a delegation by Congress of the sovereign power to make money and to regulate its value to a class of irresponsible banking associations, and 'that this money monopoly is the parent of all monopolies—the very root and essence of slavery—railroad, warehouse and all other monopolies of whatever kind or nature are the outgrowth of and subservient to this power.'" As a remedy against this money monopoly, they urged the issue of "interconvertible bonds and legal tender paper money" and the repeal of the exemption of bonds from taxation. They also urged Congress to pronounce "against land monopoly, in favour of an eight-hour law, co-operation, improved dwellings for workmen, and mechanics institutes"; it expressed sympathy with the working women and recommended to the unemployed that they "proceed to the public lands and become actual settlers."<sup>1</sup>

The significant thing in this Declaration was that it called attention to the tendency towards monopoly in the industrial system and struck the first note of opposition to it which was to lead later to the democratic uprising and the "upheaval of Labour." The practical effect of the movement upon legislation was futile. Public opinion was not sufficiently educated to support an eight-hour day and the labour leaders were too inexperienced to cope with the arts of the politicians. Nevertheless the movement was not barren in results. It had two marked effects: first, the declaration of principles, and second, the educa-

<sup>1</sup> Andrews, "History of Labour in the United States," Vol. II, p. 122.

tion of the workers. It was also characterised by the spirit of social reform between the years 1867 and 1872 and marked the beginning of the demand to obtain legislation in the interest of the people. That the movement did not go further was due to the panic of 1873 and the six years of depression in business that followed. Under the pressure of falling prices and unemployment, the labour unions disintegrated and the workers were forced to submit to reductions in wages. This, however, was not accepted without a struggle, and before the dispute was settled, it had shaken the confidence of many men in the stability of American institutions and had brought to light the working of hidden forces among the masses and the danger of certain elements in the population to popular government. The great railway strike of 1877, involving the calling out of state militia and the regular troops, the riot of Pittsburgh, the dominance for a few days of the lawless element, and the destruction of \$5,000,000 of property, alarmed the country and led to wild talk about a revolution. In the end the riot was put down by the firm hand of the national government and the strike collapsed; but the weakness that the militia had shown during the strike and its sympathy in some cases with the strikers and rioters, led to a demand for its reorganisation and the building of armories in the centre of the large cities. There was also a demand for an increase of the regular army to maintain law and order. The *Nation* expressed the general opinion of the time when it said, "The present condition of things is intolerable and can be amended only by an increase of the military establishment of the nation. Twenty-five thousand trained soldiers in addition to our present force, under the immediate orders of the President, when lawfully called upon by any State, are few enough for the existing needs of the country. No champion of public liberty can pretend that the country is in any danger from the misuse of twenty-five regiments whose pay and rations depend upon the votes of Congress from year to year."<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, during this period, the Granger movement had developed among the farmers of the Western States in opposition to the discriminations in rates practised by the railroads. "Competition," says Charles Francis Adams, "led to favoritism of the grossest character,—men or business firms whose shipments by rail were large could command their own terms, as compared with those whose shipments were small. The most irritating as well as wrongful inequalities were thus made common all over

<sup>2</sup> Rhodes, "History of United States," Vol. VIII, p. 48.

the land. Every local settlement and every secluded farmer saw other settlements and other farmers more fortunately placed, whose consequent prosperity seemed to make their own ruin a question of time. "Place to place, or man to man, they might compete; but where the weight of the railroad was flung into one scale, it was strange indeed if the other did not kick the beam."<sup>3</sup>

Against this favouritism the farmers combined to obtain legislation, to curb the monopolistic powers of the railroads. In 1870, this popular movement obtained great headway and spread from state to state and the farmers succeeded in electing many men to office. The general opinion about the railroads was expressed by the declaration of the Granges of Illinois in 1873 when it was said that "the railways of the world, except in those countries where they have been held under the strict regulation and supervision of the government, have proved themselves of as arbitrary extortion and opposed to free institutions and free commerce between the States as the feudal barons of the Middle Ages."<sup>4</sup>

Laws were demanded which would restrict the power of the railroads in regard to rates and profits and a commission to regulate the operation of the railway systems. It was held that the railroads were the servants, and not the masters, of the people. The first commission was established in 1871, but the railway officials paid little attention to it and disregarded its recommendations. This intensified the popular agitation until an appeal was carried to the Supreme Court, which decided that the railroads were subject to the laws of the state and were thus placed "at the mercy of the legislatures."<sup>5</sup> It was now no longer claimed that the railroads could be managed like a private business, but must be run with a regard to the general welfare. The Granger movement was an uprising of the democracy of the Western States and its protest against the growing monopolistic power. In the legislation against the railroads, the people had much to learn; but with time and experience the railroads were gradually brought into subjection to the state laws. And the movement culminated in the passing of the Interstate Commerce Law in 1887.

The underlying motive in both these movements was the endeavour of the democracy to curb the growing power of monopoly in business and to check the influence of the plutocracy

<sup>3</sup> Adams, "Railroads," p. 125.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

in legislation. The lessons of the strike of 1877 were not lost upon the labour leaders. They recognised that they must not confine their organisation alone to skilled labour, but must organise the semi-skilled and unskilled labour.\* This led to the organisation of the Knights of Labour in 1879 under the leadership of T. V. Powderly. The organisation spread with great rapidity and achieved its greatest victory when, on a strike on the Missouri Pacific and Gould railroads, it dictated terms to Jay Gould and forced him to accede to its demands.

There were many exaggerated reports at the time of the power of the Knights of Labour, and in 1885, the *New York Sun* went so far as to say that "five men in this country control the chief interests of five hundred thousand workingmen, and can at any moment take the means of livelihood from two and a half million of souls. . . . They can stay the nimble touch of almost every telegraph operator; can shut up most of the mills and factories, and can disable the railroads. . . . They can array labour against capital, putting labour on the offensive or the defensive, for quiet and stubborn self-protection, or for angry, organised assault, as they will." †

Undoubtedly Powderly and his executive board were prepared to exercise their power in the interests of labour, but later, by its misuse, lost much of their influence. The immediate effect of their victory was to produce an "upheaval" in the labour world of unskilled labour and to increase the numbers and power of their organisation; to awaken in the eighties among the working classes a class consciousness and to stimulate the spirit of opposition to capital. This spirit was reinforced from two sides: by the work of Henry George among the workingmen and by his book, "Progress and Poverty," which had an immense sale and led to the organisation of the Single Taxers among the *intelligentsia*. Henry George came East and ran for Mayor of New York City and polled a large vote which carried alarm and consternation among the conservative classes. During the same period, the socialists came to the front and indoctrinated the workers in the ideas of Karl Marx. Neither of these movements secured any results in the way of legislation, as their permanent effect was to create a spirit of discontent and dissatisfaction with the economic system and to prepare the minds of the workers for the social legislation of the next two decades.

It was during this period that the demand for social legislation in the interests of the working classes was formulated such as

\* Andrews, "History of Labour in the United States," Vol. II, p. 371.

prohibition of child labour, compulsory education, workmen's compensation, and employer's liability, and that a recommendation was made that "all trades and labour organisations secure proper representation in all law-making bodies by means of the ballot, and use all honourable measures by which this result can be accomplished."

In national politics, these questions were ignored and the politicians were more concerned about old issues left over from the Civil War or the business interests of the country as expressed in the protective tariff. Writing in 1887, Bryce saw little to choose in the principles of the Republican and Democratic parties. "Neither party has any principles, any distinctive tenets. Both have traditions. Both claim to have tendencies. Both have certainly war cries, organisations, interests enlisted in their support. But these interests are in the main the interests of getting or keeping the patronage of the government. Tenets and policies, points of political doctrine and points of political practice, have all but vanished. They have not been thrown away but have been stripped away by time and the progress of events, fulfilling some policies, blotting out others. All has been lost, except office or the hope of it."<sup>7</sup>

With the victory of the Democrats in 1884 and the coming of Cleveland into the presidency, there was a new emergence of the democratic movement and the formulation of democratic principles. Cleveland was a man of strong principles and his sympathies were enlisted on the side of the people. His most distinctive message, and that which made a live issue between the parties, was his tariff reform message of 1887 in which he advocated the reduction of the tariff not only on financial grounds, but also because he thought that it was taxing the people in the interest of special classes. On this message he went down to defeat and while in opposition he delivered an address in which he expressed his ideas of the principles and policy of the Democratic party. "It insists," he said, "upon that equality before the law which concedes the care and protection of the Government to simple manhood and citizenship. . . . Though heresy may sometimes have crept into its organisation, and though party conduct may at times have been influenced by the shiftiness which is the habitual device of its opponents, there has always remained, deeply imbedded in its nature and character, that spirit of true Americanism, and that love of popular rights, which has made it indestructible in disaster and defeat."

<sup>7</sup> Bryce, "American Commonwealth," Vol. II, p. 20.

The campaign of 1892 was fought ostensibly on the issue of the protective tariff; but there were greater issues involved which had grown out of the popular discontent of the last four years. The changes in economic conditions and the pressure of large business upon the retailer, farmer, and workingman, had led to an open revolt, and to the demand that legislation be passed to check this growing evil. The attack was directed first against the trusts, which had crushed out all competition in their special lines and levied upon the consumer all that the traffic would bear. The trust methods had intensified the popular agitation against monopoly and the Republicans were forced to give heed to this cry and passed the Anti-Trust Law of 1890. This law declared: "Every contract, combination in the form of trust or otherwise, or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce among the several States, or foreign nations, is hereby declared to be illegal."

The law made no effort to define a trust and created no machinery to carry its provisions into execution, but referred its enforcement to the courts. That the existence of the trusts was recognised as a growing evil at the time is unquestioned and some foresaw in its development a danger to the future of democracy. In a later decision under the Trust Act, Justice Harlan pointed out its dangers. "All who recall the condition of the country in 1890 will remember that there was everywhere among the people generally a deep feeling of unrest. The Nation had been rid of human slavery—fortunately, as all now feel—but the conviction was universal that the country was in real danger from another kind of slavery sought to be fastened on the American people; namely, the slavery that would result from aggregations of capital in the hands of a few individuals and corporations controlling, for their own profit and advantage exclusively, the entire business of the country, including the production and sale of the necessities of life. Such a danger was thought to be imminent, and all felt that it must be met firmly and by such statutory regulations as would adequately protect the people against oppression and wrong."<sup>8</sup>

The same spirit was shown in the attitude of the people towards the currency, and the farmers especially of the West and South complained of the lack of the medium of exchange and the dearth of money and demanded silver legislation to check the power of the bankers of the East. In this they were encouraged by the owners of the silver mines who, by their supporters in Congress, were able to force the Republican party to pass the

<sup>8</sup> Roe, "Our Judicial Oligarchy," p. 75.

Sherman Silver Act of 1890. The effect of this law was to compel the Treasury to purchase \$4,500,000 worth of silver a month to be paid for in gold, and for the time being, satisfied the advocates of cheap money, but it led later to a demoralisation of the finances of the country.

But it was the McKinley Tariff which brought the discontent to a head and induced an explosion of the popular wrath. This tariff was so framed as to give protection to American industry with such high duties that their effect was felt most severely by the consumer. It was claimed that the tariff was made in the interest of American workingmen; but it was soon evident that its benefits did not fall upon them but upon favoured interests who reaped a harvest through higher profits, while the workers' wages were decided by the competition for employment. The popular indignation against the tariff was widespread and in the congressional elections of 1890, the Republicans suffered an overwhelming defeat.

The Republican legislation had done nothing to stem the torrent of discontent which was sweeping over the country and to counteract the belief that the government was being used to confer special privileges upon favoured classes. The discontent of labour was manifested in a series of strikes in 1892, among which that at Homestead in the Carnegie Iron works was the most important. The strike had originated in an attempt to reduce wages at a time when the politicians were shouting about the prosperity of the country. The strike led to a conflict between the strikers and Pinkerton's detectives in which some lives were lost. Troops were ordered to the scene of the disturbance and remained there for some months. The strike collapsed with the defeat of the workers, but it left a bitter feeling behind which was felt at the ensuing election.

More ominous of the popular discontent and the uprising of democracy against legislation in favour of special interests, was the formation of the Populist party, which had its strength among the farmers of the West and South. It was a survival of the Old Greenback and Granger parties and had fallen under the delusion that the free coinage of silver would cure all the economic and social evils. To this it added a belief in the government ownership of railroads and a graduated income tax. But the campaign of 1892 centred around the tariff and was reduced to a conflict between the special interests and the people who held that the tariff favoured the growth of trusts and taxed the many for the benefit of the few. Cleveland, who attacked the tariff,

was elected by an enormous majority, receiving 277 electoral votes out of 444. But more significant of the trend of the times was the vote of the Populist party. Weaver, its candidate, carried four states, Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, and Nevada, and received a popular vote of over a million.

Cleveland interpreted the Democratic victory as a verdict of the people for a revision of the tariff and this was made effective by the Wilson Tariff, which put raw materials on the free list and reduced many of the duties, but not so as to injure new industries which had been established under the McKinley Tariff. The effectiveness of the new tariff was largely destroyed in the Senate by a combination under the leadership of two Democratic senators, Gorman and Brice, who favoured special interests and restored the duty on sugar to the benefit of the Sugar Trust. Cleveland was so distressed by the character of the bill as finally passed by the Senate that he allowed it to become law without his sanction. In a public letter, he said: "I take my place with the rank and file of the Democratic party, who believe in tariff reform, and well know what it is; who refuse to accept the results embodied in this bill as the close of the war; who are not blinded to the fact that the livery of Democratic Tariff Reform has been stolen, and worn in the service of Republican Protection; and who have marked the places where the deadly blight of treason has blasted the councils of the brave in their hour of might. The trusts and combinations—the communism of self—whose machinations have prevented us from reaching the success we deserved, should not be forgotten nor forgiven."<sup>9</sup>

But more important for the future of the country was the emergence of the silver issue as the great question of the day. Cleveland's administration had begun by the panic of 1893, due to the financial situation. The effect of the Sherman Act was one great cause of the trouble, and Cleveland had forced Congress to repeal the act, but not before its evil effects had led to the demoralisation of business. The Sherman law had resulted in draining the treasury of gold, and Cleveland, in order to protect the \$100,000,000 gold reserve, was compelled to buy gold and issue bonds. The first issue was for \$50,000,000, but the gold continued to be withdrawn from the treasury and other bond issues became necessary until \$246,000,000 of bonds were issued. For this stand against silver, Cleveland was charged by the silver advocates as working in favour of the money power and lost much influence with his own party and the Populist allies. It

<sup>9</sup> Whittle, "Life of Cleveland," p. 124.



was under these conditions that the parties prepared for the electoral campaign of 1896, which opened the great conflict between the democracy and the plutocratic oligarchy. Right or wrong a large section of the country was infected with the silver craze, but this was only the slogan for a deeper discontent. The underlying motive was the popular discontent with the ascendancy of the money power, the growth of trusts, and the refusal of the moneyed classes to bear their just share in the public expenses.

At the time that the Supreme Court declared the income tax unconstitutional, one of the dissenting judges, Mr. Justice Harlan, had said: "It nevertheless results that those parts of the (Wilson) act that survive the new theory of the Constitution evolved by these cases, are those imposing burdens upon the great body of the American people who derive no rents from real estate, and who are not so fortunate as to own invested personal property, such as the bonds or stocks of corporations, that hold within their control almost the entire business of the country. Such a result is one to be deeply deplored. It cannot be regarded otherwise than as a disaster to the country. . . . The serious aspect of the present decision is that by a new interpretation of the Constitution, it so ties the hands of the legislative branch of the government, that without an amendment of that instrument, or unless this court, at some future time, should return to the old theory of the Constitution, Congress cannot subject to taxation—however great the needs or pressing the necessities of the government—either the invested personal property of the country, bonds, stocks and investments of all kinds, or the income arising from the renting of real estate, or from the yield of personal property, except by a grossly unequal and unjust rule of apportionment among the States. Thus, undue and disproportioned burdens are placed upon the many, while the few are permitted to evade their share of responsibility for the support of the government ordained for the protection of the rights of all. I cannot assent to an interpretation of the Constitution that impairs and cripples the just powers of the National government in the essential matter of taxation, and at the same time discriminates against the greater part of the people of our country."<sup>10</sup>

In this opinion Justices Jackson and Brown agreed, while Justice Field who was opposed to the income tax held that "the present assault upon capital is but the beginning. It will be but the steppingstone to others, larger and more sweeping, till our

<sup>10</sup> Roe, "Our Judicial Oligarchy," p. 53.

political contests will become a war of the poor against the rich; a war constantly growing in intensity and bitterness."<sup>11</sup>

Justice Field's prognostication of a social war was fulfilled at the opening of the Democratic convention at Chicago in July, 1896. The insertion of the free coinage of silver in the platform and the nomination of Bryan was more than a contest between sound money and cheap money. It was a contest of opposing principles, of democracy against plutocracy. The speech to which Bryan owed his nomination brings out these differences. The free coinage of silver was only adopted because it was believed to be the means of breaking the money monopoly and of restoring to the people control of their own government. The action of the Supreme Court in declaring the income tax unconstitutional, and the decision on the Anti-Trust Act in 1895, which robbed it of any efficacy that it might have had, served to intensify the popular feeling that new legislation was necessary to curb the power of monopoly and special interests. Bryan expressed the common sentiment when he said: "The gentleman from Wisconsin has said that he fears a Robespierre. My friends, in this land of the free you need not fear that a tyrant will spring up from among the people. What we need is an Andrew Jackson to stand, as Jackson stood, against the encroachments of organised wealth." And speaking of the changed economic conditions and the income tax, he continued, "Upon which side will the Democratic party fight, upon the side of the 'idle holders of idle capital' or upon the side of the 'struggling masses'? The sympathies of the Democratic party are on the side of the struggling masses who have ever been the foundation of the Democratic party. There are two ideas of government. There are those who believe that, if you will only legislate to make the well-to-do prosperous, their prosperity will leak through to those below. The Democratic idea, however, has been that if you legislate to make the masses prosperous, their prosperity will find its way up through every class which rests upon them. . . . Having behind us the producing masses of this Nation and the world, supported by the commercial interests, the labouring interests, and the toilers everywhere, we will answer their demand for a gold standard by saying to them: 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labour this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.'"<sup>12</sup>

Bryan was endorsed by the Populist party, whose platform

<sup>11</sup> *Rev.*, "Our Judicial Oligarchy," p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> Presidential campaign of 1896, pp. 80-84.

expressed the opinions of the radical democracy. It held that the functions which are necessary to a people's government had been "basely surrendered by our public servants to corporate monopolies. The executive power and patronage have been used to corrupt our legislatures and defeat the will of the people, and plutocracy has been enthroned upon the ruins of Democracy." It declared for the free coinage of silver; denounced the sale of bonds; demanded government ownership of railroads and telegraphs, protection of public lands, and postal savings banks. One other plank expressed the new feeling in regard to the income tax which was to bear fruit later. "We demand a graduated income tax to the end that aggregated wealth shall bear its just proportion of taxation, and we denounce the recent decision of the Supreme Court relative to the income tax law as a misrepresentation of the Constitution and an invasion of the rightful powers of Congress over the subject of taxation."<sup>13</sup>

The Republican party by their unwise legislation over the tariff and their subserviency to special interests had raised the issue of the income tax. Under the McKinley Tariff, the special interests had supported Congress in 1890 in destroying the surplus formed under the old tariff and squandered the money in increased pensions to soldiers and for public buildings. This was done with the avowed purpose of making it appear necessary to increase the duties to provide an adequate revenue. When Cleveland came into power in 1893, he found a depleted treasury and Congress was forced to pass an income tax law to meet the national expenses. When the Supreme Court by a vote of five judges to four, declared the act unconstitutional and reversed the powers which the government had exercised for one hundred years, the wealthy classes rejoiced in the decision. But it called the attention of the people to income taxes and prepared the ground for a constitutional amendment which placed a much heavier burden on wealth. Little as the Republican leaders realised at the time, their legislation for special interests awoke the antagonism of the people and educated them in the policy to look to the government, rather than to themselves, to better their social condition.

The political campaign of 1896 was the most exciting held in years. Bryan stumped the country and made thousands of speeches. He spoke about the East as the "enemies' country" and came on to New York and made an address in Madison Square Garden which proved a miserable failure, because he read his address and thus limited his well-known powers as an orator.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

Mark Hanna was the leader of the Republican forces and had succeeded in securing for McKinley the Republican nomination on the basis of a sound money standard. Hanna levied a tax upon the large corporations and the banks, and succeeded in raising an enormous campaign fund of from three and a half to four millions of dollars and it was said that some of the money was spent in buying votes. Many men of progressive tendencies voted with the Republican party, as they could not support Bryan's financial heresies. The workingmen supported the ticket in large numbers in the hope of increased employment and returning business prosperity. McKinley was elected with a large majority and carried all the Eastern as well as many of the Western States, and received a popular majority of over six hundred thousand.

With his administration a new era began in industry and in the development of corporations on an enormous scale. The first attention of the administration was given to the tariff and to securing a larger revenue. The Dingley Tariff was passed in 1897, and proved an excellent bill when it passed the House, but by amendments in the Senate, its duties were raised so that they exceeded those of the McKinley Tariff. It was soon evident that the wave of depression had spent its force and that the country was on the eve of a period of great business revival. This was hastened by the war with Spain in 1898 and at its close the same year, a business boom developed which ushered in an era of great prosperity. Big crops in this country and short harvests in Europe created a large demand for the products of the farmers of the West. Under this influence, discontent passed away and the farmers paid off their mortgages, remodelled their farmhouses, and there was a great demand for manufactured goods.

Under this wave of prosperity, the trusts increased in numbers and power, but the people were prosperous and gave little heed to their development. Absorbed in business and enjoying good profits and high wages, they were oblivious to the fact that the trusts and the financial interests had obtained a grip upon the country which it would be hard, later, to break.

The political campaign of 1900 opened with everything in favour of the Republican party. The Spanish War, the business prosperity, the contentedness of the mass of the people, the settlement of the gold standard, and the strong financial situation of the country, all combined to strengthen the administration. McKinley was the logical candidate for renomination for President, and when the Republican convention met he was nominated

on the first ballot. As Vice-President Hobart had recently died, a new running mate for McKinley must be chosen. Theodore Roosevelt, who had distinguished himself in the Spanish War, and in consequence had been elected Governor of New York, was very popular in the country, and the West as well as the East wanted him for the Vice-Presidency. Roosevelt had antagonised Platt, the New York boss, and Big Business by forcing through a bill in the legislature which compelled the corporations of New York City to pay a tax upon their franchises. This involved bringing more than \$200,000,000 under taxation. Platt wanted to get rid of Roosevelt and to shelve him in the Vice-Presidency. So he threw all his influence on the side of his nomination. Hanna was distrustful of Roosevelt and regarded him as erratic and "unsafe." With a premonition of his attitude towards Big Business, Hanna, feeling that Roosevelt might prove a dangerous man to vested interests, opposed his nomination. Roosevelt had already revealed his courage and independence in dealing with public questions. The Republican leaders at Washington mistrusted him and desired a man of a less aggressive type. Neither McKinley nor his cabinet wanted him, but they gave way when news came from the convention that "the Roosevelt boom is let loose and it has swept everything. It starts with the support of Pennsylvania and New York practically solid and with California and Colorado back of it also. The feeling is that the thing is going pell-mell like a tidal wave."<sup>14</sup>

On the first ballot, Roosevelt was nominated, receiving every vote but his own. Distinguished as Roosevelt was both by heritage and achievements, he was at heart a thorough democrat and believed, like Lincoln, in the rule of the people. He had desired to remain at his work in New York and run again for governor, but in obedience to the popular demand, he accepted the nomination for Vice-President and stumped the country for the Republican ticket. Under the circumstances, it was one of those fortunate events which change the destiny of nations. Big Business was in control of the Republican party, and the "invisible government" of organised wealth exerted a strong influence on the administration. Democracy was in peril, but the people had no clear consciousness of the danger to their form of government. Few people were alive to the effect of the economic changes and the tendencies towards domination, hidden under the development of the trusts.

Bryan was again nominated by the Democratic party and stood

<sup>14</sup> Rhodes, "History," McKinley and Roosevelt Administrations, p. 134.

forth as the champion of the rights of the people. He discerned the tendency of the trusts to subvert the government and the coming rule of the plutocracy; but he was still under the spell of the silver craze and made it again the chief theme of his speeches. Nevertheless he pointed out the menace of organised wealth to the principles of popular government.

"The Chicago platform," he said, "expresses the aspirations of the plain people for a government such as Jefferson advocated and such as Lincoln defended—a government of the people, by the people, and for the people." And speaking of the Declaration of Independence, he continued, "That fundamental principle is that all men are created equal. Is this right? Is it true or is it false? What I mean to say is this: that whenever government comes into contact with the citizen, whenever the citizen touches the government, then all must stand equal before the law, and there must be no high, no low, no rich, no poor. That government must be administered according to the maxim of Jefferson: 'Equal rights to all and special privileges to none.' If the government will quit picking out favourites and follow the doctrine of equal rights to all and special privileges to no man, I have no fear that any man by his own brain or his own muscle will be able to secure a fortune so great as to be a menace to the welfare of his fellow-men. If we secure a government whose foundations are laid in justice and laws exemplifying the doctrine of equality before the law, and wealth is then accumulated to a point where it becomes dangerous, we can meet that question when it arises, and I am willing to trust the wisdom of society to meet every question that arises and remedy every wrong. . . . Put the industrial system of this nation in the hands of a few men, and let them determine the price of raw material, the price of the finished product and the wages paid to labour, and you will have an industrial aristocracy beside which a landed aristocracy would be an innocent thing."<sup>15</sup>

Bryan, however, failed to press his advantage along these lines and spent his strength in advocating Anti-Imperialism and the free coinage of silver. While he was looked upon as a firebrand by the Republicans, yet his campaign was one great factor of the political and moral awakening of the next few years.

McKinley and Roosevelt swept the country, and the Democrats succeeded in carrying only four states outside of the South. With this tremendous majority, the Republicans had everything in their hands and the power to shape the future destiny of the

<sup>15</sup> Bryan, "The Second Battle," pp. 162, 225.

nation. While McKinley began his administration by saying that he was the President of the whole people, he was too much under the influence of Hanna and the financial powers of the time to advocate any legislation which would break their hold upon the economic and social system of the day. The general spirit of the administration was reactionary, rather than progressive, and its leaders had no vision of the new forces developing which would usher in a new order.

McKinley was a good man and a strong executive, but he had no faith in the judgment and aspirations of the plain people. Had he lived, it is hard to say what would have been the future of the Republican party or what would have been the development of democracy. At the time of the assassination of President McKinley in September, 1901, the financial forces had reached the zenith of their power and competition was being crushed out under the growth of the trusts.

With the death of McKinley, Roosevelt became President and with him a new era in the economic life of the country began and a new epoch in the social legislation for the people. Roosevelt was the incarnation of the spirit of the new age and with him democracy enters upon a new development. Aristocratic in his tastes, his sympathies were with the people, and his political experience in New York had warned him of the dangers of predatory wealth to free institutions. With his first message to Congress, he struck the note which was to determine his policy as President. It was to be an administration of the laws—laws which the financial interests disregarded at pleasure and which they considered merely as a sop thrown by the politicians to the people. Many of the great corporations looked upon themselves as above the law and even decisions of the Supreme Court were disregarded with impunity. Two decisions of the court on the *Trans-Missouri Case* and the *Joint Traffic Case* in 1897 and 1898 had no effect in checking the phenomenal growth of the trusts because there was no will in the executive to enforce the law. Entrenched in power in the Senate, the financial magnates of the country had no fear of any legislation detrimental to their interests and the democracy was a matter only to be considered during the elections.

But the entrance of Roosevelt into the presidency was to bring about a profound change in the administration of the government. It restored the rule of the people and brought the great corporations under the control of the government. This was not done without a tremendous struggle in which the presi-

dent was forced to go over the heads of Congress and make a direct appeal to the people. When Roosevelt became President in 1901, he probably had no other purpose than to enforce the laws and give the people a good administration. Undoubtedly he was conscious of the dangers to democracy from the growing power of the great corporations and their flagrant disregard of law and the rights of the people; but he thought that this was largely due to the lax methods in the enforcement of the law. His experience in New York in bringing the large corporations to terms, and his fight over the Ford Franchise Bill, had given him some idea of the strength of the forces with which he would have to contend, but it was probable that he had no clear idea of the unity and power of the forces of Big Business and the hold which it had obtained over the national government.

His first experience of its power came in the settlement of the great coal strike of 1902. The strike had started over a dispute about wages and working hours. The United Mine Workers of America, under the leadership of John Mitchell, had demanded a twenty per cent increase in wages, an eight-hour day, and a new method in payment by weight. The operators refused the demands, and the miners to the number of 147,000 went on strike on May 12th. By the end of the summer conditions had become so bad that Roosevelt determined to interfere and try to bring the parties together by arbitration. He invited to the White House representatives of the men and the operators and recognising the limitations of his power he had disclaimed "any right or duty to intervene in this way upon legal grounds or upon any official relation that he bore to the situation."<sup>16</sup>

He found the labour leader amenable to reason and willing to arbitrate, but the employers were defiant and obstinate. George F. Baer distinguished himself in the course of the discussion by claiming that he and his fellow-operators were placed over the men by the dispensation of Providence for their good. No agreement could be reached and the meeting broke up. The President wrote later concerning the attitude of the employers: "They came down in a most insolent frame of mind, refused to talk of arbitration or other accommodation of any kind, and used language that was insulting to the miners and offensive to me."<sup>17</sup>

However, he did not allow his indignation at their conduct to be known, but persevered in his efforts to obtain a settlement. But it was different in the country when the spirit of the

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, "Life of Theodore Roosevelt," p. 201.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.



operators was known. The demand arose for drastic action. Under this popular demand, the President prepared to send troops into the coal regions under Major-General Schofield and to dispossess the operators and run the mines as a receiver until the commission could make its report. This threat caused the operators to recede from their high stand, and Morgan, who controlled the railroads, forced the directors to accede to arbitration. A commission was appointed and the miners returned to work. Roosevelt's prestige was much enhanced by this settlement of the strike and he gained a great hold over the people of the country. His next issue with Big Business was with the National Security Company, which was a holding company formed for the purpose of consolidating under one system the Western railroads. He carried this question to the Supreme Court under the Sherman Act of 1890 and obtained in 1904 a verdict for the government. In the meantime, he had secured the passage through Congress of a bill constituting a Department of Commerce and Labour and the Elkins Act which forbade the railroads to vary from their published rates and made a violation of the law a "punishable offence."

By this time the campaign against the railroads and Big Business was in full swing and had provoked a storm of protests from the supporters of special interests and large corporations. In this campaign, Roosevelt took the people into his confidence and issued a series of appeals and travelled through the country, addressing the people on the vital relation of corporate interests to popular government. In these addresses, he confined himself to the issue at hand and discussed the relations of corporations to the government and the evils resulting from the rebates and discriminations of the railroads. He was careful to say that he was not attacking wealth or rich men, but only the abuses which had crept into business methods. Man of action as he was, his mind was intent only upon the immediate problem in hand and he ignored its ulterior principles and their effect upon the larger questions of government. It was at this time that he coined the phrase, "the square deal," and he tried to conciliate wealth by setting forth the justice of his policy. The Department of Commerce and Labour had been investigating for some months the methods of the large trusts, like the Standard Oil and the Tobacco and Beef trusts, and their findings were published and given to the public. This brought on the fight between Big Business and the government.

It was some time before the people recognised the real drift of

the President's policy, but soon his campaign of education began to tell and the people rallied around him in his efforts to control the trusts and corporations. This attack upon the abuses of predatory wealth was accompanied with a moral awakening which swept the country and the people realised that a new leader had arisen who would restore the principles of popular government. The effect of this feeling was seen in the elections of 1904 when Roosevelt was elected President with a popular majority of two and a half millions, the largest majority, up to that time, ever cast for any President. He was now, as he said, "President in his own right," and charged by the people to carry out his policies to control the great corporations.

In the first three years of his administration, he had been feeling his way and enforcing the existing law. But in his fight against the abuses of business and the railroad management, he soon realised that the law was ineffective to check the growing evils of the rates and the rebate system. His experience, however, with Big Business, and its methods and spirit in fighting against the enforcement of the laws, had taught him that greater issues were at stake than that of merely controlling corporations; that the whole future of the country and the permanence of democratic government depended upon the results of the contest.

In his message to Congress in December, 1904, his attitude is still conciliatory; he says, "The National Government alone can deal adequately with these great corporations. . . . They (the American people) are acting in no spirit of hostility to wealth, either individual or corporate. They are not against the rich man any more than against the poor man. On the contrary, they are friendly alike toward rich man and toward poor man, provided only that each acts in a spirit of justice and decency toward his fellows. Great corporations are necessary, and only men of great and singular mental power can manage such corporations successfully, and such men must have great rewards. But these corporations should be managed with due regard to the interests of the public as a whole. Where this can be done under the present laws it must be done. Where these laws come short others should be enacted to supplement them."<sup>18</sup>

He also called attention to the need of strengthening the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate rates in view of a recent decision of the Supreme Court. From this time, however, there is evidence that Roosevelt had been enlarging his view of the relations of these questions to the problem of government. Dealing

<sup>18</sup> *Messages*, Vol. I, pp. 232-33.

with the question again in January, 1905, he lifts it out of its business connections, and sets it forth in its larger relations to the political and social life of the nation. He says, "The principles which Lincoln applied to the solution of the problems of his day are those which we must apply if we expect successfully to solve the different problems of our own day—problems which are so largely industrial. . . . Our faith in the future of the Republic is firm, because we believe that on the whole and in the long run our people think clearly and act rightly! . . . Neither this people nor any other free people will permanently tolerate the use of the vast power conferred by vast wealth and especially by wealth in its corporate form, without lodging somewhere in the Government the still higher power of seeing that this power, in addition to being used in the interest of the individual or individuals possessing it, is also used for and not against the interests of the people as a whole."<sup>19</sup>

He demanded that some such power must be lodged in the Interstate Commerce Commission, that "every shipper who uses the railroads and every man who owns or manages a railroad shall on the one hand be given justice and on the other hand be required to do justice. Justice—so far as it is humanly possible to give and to get justice—is the foundation of our Government. . . . We are striving to see that the man of small means has exactly as good a chance, so far as we can obtain it for him, as the man of larger means; that there shall be equality of opportunity for the one as for the other."

John Hay had given Roosevelt a ring in which was inclosed a bit of Lincoln's hair and which he prized very highly and at the same time King Edward had sent him a medallion on which was the portrait of John Hampden. Roosevelt wore this ring on the day of his inauguration and it may have been that the memory of Lincoln now gave a solemn tone to his address, and he came to recognise himself as the leader of the democratic movement.

At all events, his address was marked by its loftiness of tone and the future of the republic. "Our forefathers," he said, "faced certain perils which we have outgrown. We now face other perils the very existence of which it was impossible that they should foresee. Modern life is both complex and intense, and the tremendous changes wrought by the extraordinary industrial development of the last half century are felt in every fibre of our social and political being. Never before have men tried so vast and formidable an experiment as that of administering the

<sup>19</sup> "Messages," Vol. I, pp. 240-41, 244.

affairs of a continent under the forms of a democratic republic. The conditions which have told for our marvellous material well-being, which have developed to a very high degree our energy, self-reliance, and individual initiative, have also brought the care and anxiety inseparable from the accumulation of great wealth in industrial centres. Upon the success of our experiment much depends; not only as regards our own welfare, but as regards the welfare of mankind. If we fail, the cause of free self-government throughout the world will rock to its foundations; and therefore our responsibility is heavy, to ourselves, to the world as it is to-day and to the generations yet unborn." <sup>20</sup>

During his second administration, he urged upon Congress and carried through many measures of great public benefit such as the Employer's Liability Act, the Conservation Act to preserve the water-ways, the forests, and public lands for the people. He also instituted suits in the Supreme Court against the Standard Oil, Tobacco, and Beef trusts which were pending at the close of his term. He secured the passage of the Drug and Pure Food Act and a law amending the Interstate Commerce Act, both of which measures were invaluable in carrying out his policies. But in his efforts to secure a bill for the Federal Control of Corporations, he was defeated by the reactionary forces in Congress. Roosevelt was not against the rights of property, but only against predatory wealth which misused its power and exploited the people. His policy was not to attack property but to render it more secure by placing it under government restrictions. He said at this time, "One great problem that we have before us is to preserve the rights of property; these can only be preserved if we remember that they are in less jeopardy from the socialist and the anarchist than from the predatory man of wealth." <sup>21</sup>

His administrations had aroused the country in favour of remedial legislation and had awakened among the people a new sense of its right to control its own government which was to bear fruit later. At the same time it had aroused the antagonism of Big Business and the reactionary forces who believed that the government should be run in favour of special interests. At the close of his administration, the problem arose of finding a man who would carry on his policies. He thought that he found such a man in William H. Taft, his Secretary of War. Roosevelt succeeded in securing his nomination at the Republican convention, but the machinery of the organization remained in the hands

<sup>20</sup> "Messages," Vol. I, pp. 247-48.

<sup>21</sup> Lewis, "Life of Roosevelt," p. 278.

of the reactionaries and this hampered the hands of Taft, and by a combination of the politicians and Big Business, a reaction set in which threatened to undo all that Roosevelt had achieved. Nevertheless his work had not been in vain. It had brought about an ethical revival which placed political affairs under a higher moral standard and created a public opinion and faith in the principles of democracy which was destined to introduce a new standard into the political life of America and to make the government in the end truly representative of the will of the people.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DEMOCRACY AND THE GENERAL WELFARE: THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO RULE

THE evolution of democracy in America during the last one hundred years and the experiment in self-government have revealed certain well-defined principles of government. At the same time the experiment has brought to light the limitations in the objects of government. Two things, however, have become clear: first, that the people could govern themselves; second, that the end of government is the common good.

While the principles and the ends of democracy had been worked out, yet the problem was how to attain these ends and carry them out in legislation. Forty years ago Henry Sumner Maine wrote: "Of all the forms of government, Democracy is by far the most difficult. Little as the governing multitude is conscious of this difficulty, prone as the masses are to aggravate it by their avidity for taking more and more powers into their direct management, it is a fact which experience has placed beyond all dispute. It is the difficulty of democratic government that mainly accounts for its ephemeral duration."<sup>1</sup>

While time has not removed the difficulty of democratic government, it has destroyed all fear of its "ephemeral duration." When governments had only to consult the will of one man, or the desires of a ruling class, it was comparatively easy to govern the masses of the people; for the ruling class knew what they wanted and, holding the power, they had no fear of opposition. But with the rise of democratic government, new problems emerged and the government had to consider the desires and good of all the people. The conflicts of different interests in society and the problems growing out of the modern economic and social conditions, raised questions which were not easily solved by the legislator. The progress of democracy had not destroyed the antagonism of class interests. In fact, it had intensified rather than minimised these differences. The conflict between capital and labour, the tendency of wealth towards domination, the

<sup>1</sup> Maine, "Popular Government," p. 87.

awakening of class consciousness among the workers, the new problems of government raised by the new economic forces, all had combined to increase the difficulty of democratic government and to subject it to the strain of clashing interests.

So long as the legislators were controlled by certain sections of the community, or by certain special interests, whether of capital or of labour, the government degenerated into a conflict between opposing interests. If the special interests predominated, the government became a plutocracy and sacrificed the many to the few; if labour was in the ascendancy, the tendency was to use the government to better economic conditions and to bring about a more equal distribution of wealth. In both cases, justice and equality before the law were sacrificed to class interests. It is this conflict of class feeling that creates the problems of democratic government. Against these special interests, democracy is opposed both by its principles and its spirit. Democracy is a government by the people for the common good. It is antagonistic to all class interests and all special privileges. Its fundamental principles are justice to all and equality of opportunity for all. When wealth and corporations endeavour to influence the government in their favour, then the common good demands that they be curbed and controlled in the interest of all the people.

When labour seeks a position of privilege which is not accorded to other classes, then the government opposes such claims in the interest of the common welfare. Whenever democracy degenerates into a government of the rich against the poor, or the poor against the rich, it departs from its fundamental principles. And it is because men have often lost sight of these distinctions that the ends of democracy have been perverted and transformed.

The end of democracy is the general welfare; but disputes and conflicts have arisen because of differences of opinion as to the meaning of the general welfare or the common good. In the last one hundred years, there has been an enormous development in the ideas of the true ends of government. To-day it is generally agreed that government by the people involves a government for the people. But how far does this principle go? How much does it involve the interference of the government in the social and economic life of the people? These are questions for the practical legislator, and he can make no progress in their solution unless he has clear ideas of the fundamental principles of democratic government.

The permanent work of Roosevelt lies not so much in his administration of the power of the government as in his clear

statement of the principles and aims of democracy. His administration was a concrete lesson to the people of the principles of democracy as applied to government. He restored the government to the rule of the people and gave a splendid example of a government for the common good. He administered the laws without fear or without favour and advocated legislation, not for special interests, but for the general welfare.

The democratic upheaval which had been started by the administration of Roosevelt in 1901 culminated in the campaign of 1912. In the interval, many things had been accomplished in the way of controlling Big Business and in fostering social legislation; but on his retirement from the presidency, the government had reverted to its old position of class legislation and special privileges. The reactionary forces under President Taft secured a new grip upon the government and there was grave danger that all that Roosevelt had done would be frustrated and lost. The Conservation Commission had been deprived of its efficiency, the law of Employer's Liability had been held up by the decision of the Supreme Court, the Standard Oil and Tobacco trusts had obtained immunity under the decision of the Supreme Court which read into the Anti-Trust Law the words "reasonable restraint" and reversed two previous decisions of the court. From all sides it was clear that the people were losing control of the government. Taft had been elected as the heir of the Roosevelt policies, but he was not strong enough to stand up under the pressure of the politicians and the special interests. He had a great opportunity to become the leader of the people and to advance the cause of democratic government; but he missed his opportunity when he refused to veto the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Bill and he sealed his political future when he advocated and supported the new tariff in his address at Winona. From that time he lost his hold upon the people and the progressive element in the Republican party began to look around for another leader. With a blindness to the changed economic conditions and the new forces of democracy, the Republicans thought that they could ignore the demands of the people and that they could maintain their power by serving the special interests. But the administration of Roosevelt had wrought a revolution in the thoughts of the people and had given them a vision of democratic government which could not be forgotten. The policies of the Taft administration awoke a popular protest which marked a new advance in the democratic movement.

It was evident that if democracy was to triumph, it could not



submit to the reactionary elements in the Republican party. Roosevelt realised the greatness of the interests at stake and threw himself into the breach and became the leader in the new movement. He struck the first note of the campaign in his address on the New Nationalism in August, 1910. Speaking at Ossawatimie, the place made sacred to the cause of liberty by its association with the name of John Brown, he revived again the Lincoln tradition and quoted his great words on labour in which he said, "Labour is prior to, and independent of, capital; capital is only the fruit of labour and could never have existed but for labour. Labour is the superior of capital and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights which are as worthy of protection as any other rights. . . . Nor should this lead to a war upon the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labour; property is desirable; it is a positive good in the world." <sup>2</sup>

And then Roosevelt, commenting on this statement, went on to say, "I stand for the Square Deal. But when I say that I am for the square deal I mean not merely that I stand for fair play under the rules of the game, but that I stand for having those rules changed so as to work for a more substantial equality of opportunity and of reward for equally good service." He also outlined his plan again to drive Big Business out of politics and give the government supervision of corporations, and closed with advocating a social programme which included workmen's compensation, "national laws to regulate child labour, and the work of women, and the enforcement of better sanitary conditions for wage-workers." <sup>3</sup>

Eighteen months later, in an address entitled, "A Charter of Democracy," at Columbus, Ohio, on February 12th, Lincoln's birthday, he laid down the progressive principles. He began his address by saying, "I believe in pure democracy. With Lincoln, I hold that 'this country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their Constitutional right of amending it.' We Progressives believe that the people have the right, the power, and the duty to protect themselves and their own welfare; that human rights are supreme over all other rights; that wealth should be the servant, not the master, of the people. We believe that unless representative government does absolutely represent the people it is not representative government at all. We test the worth of all men and all measures by asking how

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, "Life of Roosevelt," p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

they contribute to the welfare of the men, women and children of whom this Nation is composed. We are engaged in one of the great battles of the age-long contest waged against privilege on behalf of the common welfare."

He then laid down five great principles of the democratic faith: first, the right of the people to rule; second, the right of the people to determine their own form of government; third, the right of the people, and not the courts, to decide constitutional questions which affected their economic and social conditions; fourth, his faith in the plain people to decide questions concerning their own interests; fifth, the rights of man as superior to the rights of property. Coming to the ends of democratic government, he declared that its first essential was to secure equality of opportunity in the organisation and the administration of business. To achieve this end it was necessary for the government regulation of business and for the control of monopoly. And he added that "we should not fear, if necessary, to bring the regulation of big corporations to the point of controlling conditions so that the wage-worker shall have a wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living, and hours of labour not so excessive as to wreck his strength by the strain of unending toil and leave him unfit to do his duty as a good citizen in the community."<sup>4</sup>

Second, that legislation should have for its end social justice to prevent the wastage of human life under our industrial system and to protect the weak from oppression by unbridled competition. Third, to promote an equal system of taxation and to require all classes to support the government in accordance with their means. For this end, he advocated an amendment to the Constitution to restore the income tax.

To achieve these ends, Roosevelt advocated changes in the machinery of government which would bring it more directly under the control of the people. First, the short ballot; second, direct primaries; third, election of United States senators by the people; fourth, initiative and referendum; fifth, the recall in certain cases, but he was more doubtful of the efficacy of this measure.

A month later, he laid down the fundamental principles of democracy and the supreme issue of the fight of the people in an address at Carnegie Hall, New York City, on the "Right of the People to Rule." And at the close of the address, he showed that upon this great principle depended the fate of democratic government in the world.

<sup>4</sup> Roosevelt, "Progressive Principles," pp. 46-100.

"We, here in America, hold in our hands the hope of the world, the fate of the coming years; and shame and disgrace will be ours if in our eyes the light of high resolve is dimmed, if we trail in the dust the golden hopes of men. If on this new continent we merely build another country of great but unjustly divided material prosperity, we shall have done nothing; and we shall do as little if we merely set the greed of envy against the greed of arrogance, and thereby destroy the material well-being of all of us. To turn this government either into government by a plutocracy or government by a mob would be to repeat on a larger scale the lamentable failures of the world that is dead. We stand against all tyranny, by the few or by the many. We stand for the rule of the many in the interest of all of us, for the rule of the many in a spirit of courage, of common sense, of high purpose, above all in a spirit of kindly justice towards every man and every woman. We not merely admit, but insist, that there must be self-control on the part of the people, that they must keenly perceive their own duties as well as the rights of others; but we also insist that the people can do nothing unless they not merely have, but exercise to the full, their own rights. The worth of our great experiment depends upon its being in good faith an experiment—the first that has ever been tried—in true democracy on the scale of a continent, on a scale as vast as that of the mightiest empires of the Old World. Surely this is a noble idea, an ideal for which it is worth while to strive, an ideal for which at need it is worth while to sacrifice much; for our ideal is the rule of all the people in a spirit of friendliest brotherhood towards each and every one of the people."<sup>5</sup>

It was on these principles that the battle for democracy was fought in the great election of 1912. The reactionaries had no belief in the judgment of the plain people. They believed that democracy could not govern, but must entrust the government to the trained politicians, the cultured, and the wealthy. If there is one fact that is revealed by the development of democracy during the last one hundred and fifty years, it is this: that the upper classes have shown a woeful incapacity to govern the people justly in the interest of the common welfare. Whenever they have been in control of the government, they have administered it with an interest to special classes and with an utter disregard for the interests of the mass of the people. The tyranny of the majority may be a danger of democratic government, but so far it is not comparable with the tyranny of the minority. The major-

<sup>5</sup> Roosevelt, "Progressive Principles," p. 44.

ity may err and may at times be carried away by its passions and prejudices, but it is only for the moment. The plain people have a keen sense of justice and on the great questions which concern the welfare of the country, the judgment of the people to men and measures is on the whole right. A signal instance of this was furnished by the experience of Lincoln in the critical year of the Civil War and the summer preceding the elections of 1864. Then many among the upper classes, blinded by their prejudices and interests, failed to see the greatness in Lincoln's character and the vital issues bound up with his re-election. It was the plain people who rallied around the President and, by their loyalty and devotion, sent him back to power and made possible the crowning victory of the Union. Roosevelt was keenly alive to the experience of Lincoln in his great struggle for the Union, and he felt that the mantle of the great President had fallen upon his shoulders and that he was called to lead the people out of the bondage of modern economic conditions into the new freedom of popular government. He said at this time, "Both vision and intensity of conviction must go to the make-up of any man who is to lead the forward movement, and mildly good intentions are utterly useless as substitutes. The essential difference, as old as civilised history, is between the men who with fervour and broad sympathy and imagination stand for the forward movement, the men who stand for the uplift and betterment of mankind, and who have faith in the people, on the one hand; and on the other hand, the men of narrow vision and small sympathy, who are not stirred by the wrongs of others. With these latter stand also those other men who distrust the people but wish to keep them helpless so as to exploit them for their own benefit."<sup>6</sup>

It was with these convictions that Roosevelt entered the campaign. At first he hesitated to announce himself as a candidate for the presidency and urged that the Progressives seek some other candidate like La Follette, but it was soon evident that the people demanded his leadership and that he alone could lead to victory the battalions of democracy. Finally at the solicitation of the governors of seven states, he consented to run and threw himself into the campaign with all his ardour and energy. In the campaign for the nomination in the primaries he carried everything before him and won every election wherever the people could express their will. The great states like Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, elected his delegates by large majorities, and New Jersey, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Oregon, and Cali-

<sup>6</sup> Roosevelt, "Progressive Principles," p. 1.

foria were carried by the Progressives. The delegates also from Minnesota, West Virginia, Maryland, and Maine were enrolled on Roosevelt's side, and he carried half the delegates of Massachusetts. But the "Old Guard" and the administration where the organisation was in control carried the delegates for Taft and to these were added the delegates from the Southern States who were elected by the office-holders but who could contribute nothing to the Republican victory.

"Only in those states which had presidential primaries was the result unquestioned," writes Dean Lewis. "In the other states, contest after contest between rival delegates, each claiming that they were entitled to seats in the convention, was filed with the national committee, the body charged with the duty of making up the temporary roll of the convention. When, in June, a short time before the convention, the last state had selected delegates, no fewer than 220 contests were before the National Committee."<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, among the 220 contested elections, many of them were the result of fraud and a deliberate purpose to deprive the people of their rights. The National Committee was in control of the reactionaries, and they voted to seat 72 delegates, all of whom belonged to the Taft side. When these contests were carried to the floor of the convention, the decision of the committee was sustained by a majority composed of these same 72 delegates. After this decision of the convention, the Progressives refused to take any part in the proceedings and merely attended the sessions as spectators. Roosevelt had come to Chicago to guide the action of his delegates, and on his arrival, he was received by the people with an enthusiasm which has rarely been equalled. "As his automobile passed through the streets," says Dean Lewis, "from the station to the Congress Hotel on Michigan Avenue, it pushed its way through packed masses of people, ahead, behind and—at the cross streets—on either side, nothing but people wedged in like pins as far as the eye could see. Everybody yelled; everybody howled, and all were borne along by the irresistible force of the delighted mob. Rarely had any public man in this country aroused such intense enthusiasm. Everything combined to this end—his great popularity, the wonderful fight he had made, the deep and widespread conviction that his enemies were plotting to steal the nomination he had won, and that he was there to fight that theft to the end."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, "Life of Roosevelt," p. 351.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 355.

Until the last moment he had hoped that justice would be done to his cause, but he was dealing with a class of men who were not guided by justice, but whose actions were dictated by political expediency, men who were politicians first and who resented the right of the people to rule and desired to retain the good old methods of controlling the convention.

Just before the final decision was reached, Roosevelt had given an address at the Auditorium to a great audience and he lifted his cause on the high moral plain which had always characterised his appeals to the people, concluding with the words, "We stand at Armageddon and we battle for the Lord." This became the battle-cry of his followers and it was under this moral enthusiasm that the Progressive Party was formed.

Before the convention was over, a mass-meeting of Progressives was held at the Opera House and Governor Johnson of California presided. It was decided to call a meeting of Progressives in August and to organise the party. In organising the Progressive party, Roosevelt was not oblivious to the momentous step he was taking and the great issues involved. He knew that a division of the Republican party implied a Democratic victory at the polls and that he had little chance of carrying the elections. But his action was determined by larger considerations. "If we form a third party," he said, "and go out and fight for better social conditions in this country, we will accomplish more in three months than could be accomplished, under ordinary conditions, in a dozen years."<sup>9</sup> Moreover, he felt that the injustice that he had suffered in losing the nomination and the way the people's will had been overridden by the Chicago convention must not be allowed to pass unrebuked. "Besides which he was mad, mad clean through, and did not regret at all the opportunity which the campaign gave him to speak plainly the truth as he saw it."<sup>9</sup>

The convention of the Progressive party was held at Chicago on August 5th, and the platform was passed embodying the great principles of democracy. These were expressed in its opening sentences: "We of the Progressive party here dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the duty laid upon us by our fathers to maintain that government of the people, by the people and for the people whose foundations they laid.

"We hold with Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln that the people are the masters of their Constitution, to fulfil its purposes and to safeguard it from those who, by perversion of

<sup>9</sup> Lewis, "Life of Roosevelt," p. 369.

its intent, would convert it into an instrument of injustice. In accordance with the needs of each generation the people must use their sovereign powers to establish and maintain equal opportunity and industrial justice, to secure which this government was founded and without which no republic can endure.

"This country belongs to the people who inhabit it. Its resources, its business, its institutions and its laws should be utilised, maintained or altered in whatever manner will best promote the general interest. It is time to set the public welfare in the first place."

The platform then advocated the rule of the people; amendments to the Constitution to meet the changed economic and social conditions; control of business corporations and federal supervision of Big Business and the control of monopolies; conservation of the natural resources of the nation; suffrage for women; "such restrictions of the power of the courts as shall leave to the people the ultimate authority to determine fundamental questions of social welfare and public policy"; "a graduated inheritance tax as a national means of equalising the obligations of holders of property to government and the ratification of the pending amendment to the Constitution giving the government power to levy an income tax"; but the clauses on "social and industrial justice" were the most important. They stated that the "conservation of human resources through an enlightened measure of social and industrial justice" was the duty of the nation. This involved legislation to prevent industrial accidents, occupational diseases, overwork, involuntary unemployment, and other injurious effects incident to modern industry; fixing minimum safety and health standards, and federal control over interstate commerce, and the taxing power to maintain such standards; prohibition of child labour; minimum wages for women, "to provide a living scale in all industrial occupations; prohibition of night work; eight-hour day; standards of compensation for death by industrial accidents and injury and trade diseases, which will transfer the burden of lost earnings from the families of the working people to the industry, and thus to the community; the protection of home life against the hazards of sickness, irregular employment and old age through the adoption of a system of social insurance adapted to American use."

The convention was like a religious gathering rather than a political meeting; for it was possessed with the moral enthusiasm which was the culmination of the ethical revival of the last ten years. Ex-Senator Beveridge struck the key-note of the

moral idealism of the delegates in the opening address and received a great ovation. Then "someone started to sing the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic,'" says Lewis, "With one accord the great audience joined in the immortal words of the opening stanza:

'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible, swift sword.  
His truth is marching on.'"<sup>10</sup>

Roosevelt was nominated for President by acclamation and Johnson of California for Vice-President. The political campaign that followed was one of the most exciting ever held in the country. Woodrow Wilson was nominated by the progressive element of the Democratic party which had succeeded in overthrowing the conservative faction by the hope of a democratic victory and the split in the Republican party. In a large measure Wilson adopted the principles of the Progressive party which held the progressive elements within the Democratic party and prevented their defection to the new party. Wilson had had a record on progressive principles and his sympathies were with the social reformers. In his letter of acceptance, he had emphasised the duty of "setting up the rule of justice and right in respect of such matters as the tariff, control of trusts, and labour legislation."

Roosevelt toured the country and everywhere drew large crowds and educated the people in the Progressive principles. He spoke not merely for the issues of the present hour, but for the greater issues aligned with the future of democracy. "Nowhere else in all the world is there such a chance for the triumph on a gigantic scale of the great cause of democratic and popular government. . . . We who stand for the cause of the uplift of humanity and the betterment of mankind are pledged to eternal war against wrong whether by the few or by the many, by a plutocracy or by a mob. The present contest is but a phase of the larger struggle. Assuredly the fight will go on whether we win or lose; but it will be a sore disaster to lose. What happens to me is not of the slightest consequence; I am to be used, as in a doubtful battle any man is used, to his hurt or not, so long as he is useful, and is then cast aside or left to die. This fight is far

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, "Life of Roosevelt," p. 371.



too great to permit us to concern ourselves about any one man's welfare. If we are true to ourselves by putting far above our own interests the triumph of the high cause for which we battle, we shall not lose." <sup>11</sup>

But the election was a foregone conclusion, and Wilson was elected by more than six million votes, but he obtained only a minority of the total vote. Roosevelt carried eight states, including Pennsylvania, and Taft secured only two states, Vermont and Utah.

The campaign, however, of the Progressive party had not been in vain. The ideals they contended for and the principles they advocated were taken up by the Democratic party under Wilson, and during the next eight years they passed into law. Stupidly the reactionaries had thought to stem the democratic movement by defeating Roosevelt, but they were dealing with popular forces of whose nature and power they had no conception. In the progress of democracy, its influence had not been confined to any one party, but it made its power felt first in one party and then in the other. Democracy had been held in check for a time and its further progress had seemed to be arrested; but it was only gathering strength for another advance, and when it emerged again in the political arena, it was seen to be stronger than ever.

True to his campaign pledges, President Wilson immediately took measures to give them effect through legislation, and in the first years of his administration he pushed through Congress the great measures of Tariff Reform, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Reserve Bank. This latter measure was passed in the teeth of the opposition of the banks and the money power, and proved the most valuable piece of legislation ever put upon the statute book and placed the credit of the country at the disposal of the business men and the farmers. In many instances, since, it probably averted a panic and it proved invaluable in the crisis of the World War. During this same period, two amendments to the Constitution of far-reaching importance were also passed; namely, the income tax amendment and the election of United States senators by the people.

Wilson was not unmindful of the need of social legislation, and he secured the passage of the National Child Labor Law, the Farmers' Rural Credit Bill, and the Clayton Act which was in favour of labour. He had extended the eight-hour day to government employees and under pressure from the Railroad Bro-

<sup>11</sup> Roosevelt, "Progressive Principles," pp. 310-1.

erhoods, in 1916, he gave way to the unions and advocated the Adamson Act with the eight hours and extra pay for extra hours.

The World War intervened in 1914 and raised new problems and new issues. But far from hindering the democratic movement, it only accelerated it and gave a tremendous impulse to the forces working towards the rule of the people. At first, the country was only concerned with maintaining its neutrality, but the force of events and the issues at stake gradually drew the nation into the vortex of the war. President Wilson was at heart a pacifist, and his speech, after the destruction of the *Lusitania*, on "Too proud to fight," struck with consternation the minds of many of his countrymen. All during these critical years of 1915-6, he held consistently to his pacifist principles and he expressed his true opinion in his address before the League to Enforce Peace when he said, "With its causes and its objects we are not concerned. The obscure fountains from which its stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for or explore."<sup>12</sup>

In the political campaign of 1916, the Republicans were reunited under Hughes and swept all the Eastern States, but Wilson carried the Western and Southern States and was elected by a narrow margin on his record of social legislation and the slogan that "he had kept us out of war."

Within a few months, however, the ruthlessness of Germany in her submarine warfare forced the President's hand, and in January, 1917, the nation was on the verge of war. On the second of April, the President came before the joint session of Congress and urged a declaration of war against Germany. In a noble address he stated the principles underlying the war and the causes for which America would fight. He said, "We are glad, now that we see the facts with no veil of false pretence about them, to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied

<sup>12</sup> Addresses," p. 271

when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them."<sup>13</sup>

War was declared on April 6th, and the nation was embarked on the great enterprise to "make the world safe for democracy."

The war called forth the idealistic elements of the American character, and the nation, regardless of party, rallied around the government and poured forth its men and money without stint to beat the Hun. The principles and ideals which Wilson presented as the objects of the war struck a high note. Gifted in an extraordinary degree with the power of lucid and clear statement, he expressed the ideas and sentiments of the mass of his countrymen in regard to the objects of the war. He stood forth as the champion of the principles of democracy and the Rights of Man, and around him rallied the progressive forces of the nation. The war gave a new impulse to social legislation and laid a new stress upon progressive principles. The sentiment for the eight-hour day, workmen's compensation, protection of women, and the minimum wage for women made rapid strides.

In taxation, the wildest dreams of the populist had been embodied into law. The graduated income tax and the surtaxes would have met the demands of even the socialists. The nation, in its devotion to the war, hesitated at no sacrifice and agreed without a complaint to conscription and to heavy taxation. Under the war powers of the Constitution, President Wilson became practically a dictator and Congress did not refrain from passing any legislation that would strengthen the arm of the executive in the prosecution of the war. The war took on the character of a crusade, and two millions of men landed in France and another million and a half who were ready to follow witnessed to the enthusiasm of the people.

But with the coming of the Armistice on November 11, 1918, new problems arose which were to furnish the acid test of the wisdom of the President's policy. At that time he held a most enviable position. He was the acknowledged leader of the progressive forces of the country and could have been the arbitrator of the destinies of Europe. The masses in the European countries revered him almost as a Messiah. All the progressive elements in those countries looked to him for leadership. But at Paris he destroyed much of his influence when he gave way to the demands of Lloyd George and Clemenceau and lost his hold over the liberals in the intricacies of the Peace Conference. In his devotion to the idea of the League of Nations and his

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 380.

refusal to allow any reservations by this country in the acceptance of the treaty, he weakened his hold upon the American people.

Once in December, 1919, the Senate would have adopted the treaty by a combined vote of the Democrats and moderate Republicans, but the President refused any concessions and this led ultimately to the rejection of the treaty. It was one of the tragedies of history. The war had kindled the ideals of the American people and they were ready to take their place in a League of Nations and assume their world-wide responsibilities. They were not ready, however, to endorse a League which seemed to them to infringe upon the Constitution of the United States. That the President missed his opportunity was probably due to his failing health, brought on by his long and arduous labours in the war, which destroyed something of his poise and calmness of judgment. In his devotion to a doctrine, he lost touch with the masses of the people and seemed to desire to force upon them a League which the people believed would limit their independence of action in international affairs. In Wilson's campaign through the country in the fall of 1919, in the interest of the League of Nations, far from conciliating the opinions of those opposed or doubtful of the expediency of the League, he adopted the plan of attacking his opponents and the Republican leaders in the Senate. His apparent attitude of dictation was resented by many who otherwise would have been glad to follow his leadership. This had its effect in the presidential campaign of 1920. The Democrats had nominated Governor Cox for President and he ran on the issue of the League of Nations and was looked upon as the representative of the President's policy. The Democratic party encountered an overwhelming defeat, unparalleled in its magnitude. The explanation of the causes and influences which led to this result is difficult to determine. In some measure the defeat was due to the German vote which condemned the part Wilson had taken in the Treaty of Versailles; to the Irish vote which resented his refusal to advocate the freedom of Ireland at Paris; to the Italian vote which was angry with his declaration against the Italian Government and Fiume; to vested interests who protested against his social and labour legislation; but more than anything else it was due to the protest of the people against the apparent assumption of dictatorial powers and the revolt of democracy against any President who seemed to forget that he was the servant of the people and not the master.

The Republicans elected Harding and returned to power on the tidal wave of democracy. They had an enormous majority in the House and controlled the Senate. There had been a large increase in the voters, owing to the constitutional amendment which conferred the vote upon women, and the election, as never before, was the expression of the will of the people. To be sure it had been checked and thwarted at the Republican convention where two candidates, Hoover and Leonard Wood, had been the favourites at the primaries. When a deadlock between the candidates developed in the convention, Senator Harding was brought forward and the will of the people in the nomination was set aside. The victory at the polls was not so much a verdict for Harding as a protest against the policies of Wilson. Once again, after eight years, the Republican party had a great opportunity to lead the democratic movement and to enact legislation for the common welfare; but whether Harding would be strong enough to hold his party to such a program was very doubtful. Writing after the inauguration of Harding in March, 1921, Lane had said, "The country will be generous for a time to Harding. . . . But it will turn against him with anger unbounded if he turns the country over to the men who want office and the men who want privilege and favour. The politicians and the profiteers may be his undoing. I hope not!"<sup>14</sup>

The depression of business beginning in November, 1920, and continuing throughout the next year, brought untold suffering to many classes of the people and laid the basis for a new period of discontent. Unemployment was widespread and four or five millions of workers were out of work. The farmers encountered great losses and the prices of farm-products fell to those of 1914. Business men and firms also took their losses and the general depression was not hopeful for the beginning of the Harding administration. Moreover a certain Bourbon element in business talked openly of the opportunity offered to crush labour and its organisations. This did not minister to the good feeling between labour and capital. Under these conditions, the Republicans passed the Esch-Cummings Railroad Bill which seemed to be more in the interest of the security-holders than of labour and this legislation was followed by a campaign to bring down war wages. In the fall of 1921, a nation-wide strike among the railroad men was threatened; but fortunately this was avoided and the questions at issue were referred to the Railroad Labour Board. After this legislation a new tariff was passed which

<sup>14</sup> *Boston Herald*, November 10, 1922.

revised duties upward and followed the old Republican method of favouring special interests.

The recommendations of the Tariff Commission were ignored and protection for infant industries and tariff for revenue gave place to a tariff for favoured industries and placed new burdens upon the consumer. The income-tax was revised and removed some of the taxes on consumption, but its most marked feature was the reduction of the excess profit tax which benefited most the large owners of wealth. In the spring of 1922, the coal strike came on and lasted through the summer and fall and the administration lost much influence by its refusal to handle the situation and to compel the operators and miners to come together as Roosevelt had done in 1902. On the whole there were many signs that the Republican party was falling again under the control of the reactionaries. Blind to the trend of events and the progressive spirit at work in the nation, it thought it could revive the methods of a past era. It was destined to be undeceived in the congressional elections of 1922. The result of the election was no mere reaction as often has happened in the off years of an administration. It was a democratic upheaval and a revival of progressive principles. As a Washington correspondent wrote, "The bombshell which burst under the ramparts of the Republican party yesterday was more highly charged than any one had supposed. Washington is bewildered."<sup>15</sup>

The remarkable fact about the election was that it was not only a victory of the Democratic party, but also of the progressive element among the Republicans who polled an enormous vote in the Western States. La Follette was elected in Wisconsin by a majority of 200,000 and Johnson in California by 300,000. Many members of the House and the Senate had been returned by a union of the farmer-labour vote of the Western States. The Republican majority in the House was reduced from 165 to 20, and in the Senate the majority was greatly reduced and the Progressives held the balance of power.

It was not surprising that under these circumstances there should be talk of forming a new party on progressive principles, and drawing its members from the two old parties. Whatever the election signified, it revealed a widespread discontent with existing conditions and a drift in some places towards socialism. But its real meaning was the resurgence of the democratic movement and a new advance towards the principles of democracy. It followed the same method which has been characteristic of the

<sup>15</sup>*Boston Herald*, November 9, 1922.

progress of democracy throughout its history. The effort to hold back democracy by reactionary legislation has always proved futile and served only to rouse its latent force and to give it a new momentum towards its destined end of the rule of the people for the general welfare.

Unless the conservative classes can take to heart the lessons from history and experience and adjust themselves to the new political and economic conditions, they will be thrown aside in the march of democracy.

Their interest and safety demand that they march with, and not against, the democratic forces which control the modern world.

There are two classes who view the future with apprehension, if not with alarm; the first are those who fear the domination of Big Business and dread the time when the people will be crushed down under the power of the large corporations; the second are those who fear and talk of revolution and identify the democratic movement with the I. W. W., the Bolsheviks, and the communists. Both classes fail to read the signs of the times. The first have no faith in the power of democracy and its innate force to work out its destined end. The second class misapprehend both the principle and tendency of democracy. The whole history of democracy during the last one hundred and fifty years in America has been a protest against the undue influence of the rights of property and its tendency towards domination in the legislation and government of the nation. Thwarted and defeated for a time, democracy could not be kept down, but it steadily moved forward taking up men and events into its movement until it became in our day the expression of the national life and the power which controls the government in the states and in the national legislature.

The nation now has come to the point in its national development where no class, whether capital or labour, or a farmer's bloc, can use for long the government in its own interest, but must ultimately be broken against the movement of popular government which expresses the rule of all the people for the general welfare.





BOOK II

DEMOCRACY IN FRANCE



## CHAPTER I

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA: THE PRELUDE TO THE REVOLUTION

DR. PRICE wrote in 1783, "With heart-felt satisfaction, I see the revolution in favour of universal liberty which has taken place in America: a revolution which opens a new prospect in human affairs, and begins a new era in the history of mankind."<sup>1</sup>

His forecast of the beginning of a new era was destined to be realised in a few years in France: for it is to France that the world owes the passion for liberty and the Rights of Man which led to the triumph of democracy. Out of the birth-throes of the French Revolution came those ideas of equality and democracy which awakened in men the hopes of a new era and shook the structure of despotism built up by kings through a thousand years. Out of that Revolution emerged those principles of self-government which transformed the constitutions of nations and changed the history of the world. The enthusiasm with which men of liberal ideas hailed the first acts of the French Revolution reveals that they felt that a new era had dawned for humanity and that the death-knell had sounded for autocracy. And they were not wrong in their prevision of the outcome of these events. In spite of the excesses of democracy in the Reign of Terror and reaction towards autocracy which followed, the principles of liberty were never lost, but revived again and went forth to new victories in a later age.

The story of the French Revolution is so absorbing, the march of events is so thrilling, and the culmination of the Revolution is so dramatic, that the great social and political forces are too often ignored by historians. In many instances, the histories are coloured by the prejudices and passions of the revolutionary period. Royalist writers, like M. Taine, see in the Revolution only the spontaneous outburst of the spirit of anarchy which led to the destruction of the old régime and to the overthrow of the monarchy. Democratic historians, like Michelet, picture the

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Price, "Importance of the American Revolution," p. 3. 1784.

Revolution as the awakening of the people from their servitude and oppression, and in his enthusiasm for democracy he, too, often covers over its crimes and excesses. But more generally, the dramatic elements of the struggle—the taking of the Bastille, the October days at Versailles, the flight to Varennes, the downfall of the monarchy, the execution of the king, the struggle between the Girondins and Jacobins, and the Reign of Terror are the absorbing facts of interest. These factors obscure the importance of the constitutional struggle in which democracy was born and the events of that period, covering over three years, in which democracy steadily advanced through the conflicts of parties and the plots of the counter-revolutionists. Not always has justice been done to those early leaders of the Revolution and to the part they played in laying the foundations for the triumph of democracy in Europe.

They have often been blamed for the downfall of the monarchy and the excesses of the Terror, whereas if the principles which they advocated had been sincerely accepted by the king, the government of France might have been established upon a strong constitutional basis. It is want of appreciation of this fact which has led to the defamation of the character of Lafayette and the men of the Patriot party. Democracy has too often been identified with the work of the extremists—men like Marat and Hébert, Camille Desmoulins and Robespierre, men who perverted the ideas of democracy and made it the instrument of autocracy and terror. Thus to speak of the triumph of democracy in the Revolution is to think of it as the work of the men of the terrorist school. But this is to overlook the immense services which were rendered by the men of '89 in educating the people in the principles of true democracy. It was always a matter of pride with Lafayette that he was the first to publish the Declaration of Rights in Europe, and no perversion of these principles in the Revolution can take from him his true place as a leader of the people. The Terror was not due to the Rights of Man, but was the inevitable result of the political passions and ambitions of politicians struggling to obtain power over the masses, terrified by the approach of the Prussians to Paris and the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick. This fear was kept alive for two years by the plots of the émigrés, the civil war in the provinces, and by the foreign invasion with its levy "en masse." These events were used by the demagogues to fan into fanaticism the minds of the people. When the foreign invader was driven from French soil by the battle of Fleurus in June 1794, the civil war

extinguished, and France delivered from fear, then the power of Robespierre crumbled and he was sent to the scaffold. At every critical stage of the Revolution, when it seemed that the ideas of constitutional government might have been established under the leadership of men of moderate principles, the schemes of the court and the plots of the émigrés who hoped to discredit the Constitution, furnished the occasion for a new popular uprising which only served to push the Revolution to further excesses.

The Revolution was the result of causes long foreseen and the culmination of ideas and social forces which had prepared the minds of men for a change. The Revolution was not simply due to the facts of misgovernment, disordered finances, and despotic rule, but to the progress of knowledge and the spread of liberal ideas. As Mirabeau wrote in 1790, "There is no one to-day who acknowledges that the French nation was prepared for the Revolution, which has just been accomplished, by the consciousness of its evils and the faults of its Government, any more than by the general progress of its enlightenment."<sup>2</sup>

It was the dissemination of the principle of the sovereignty of the people, the spread of the ideas of liberty and equality among the middle classes and among the liberal-minded nobility, that created the spirit which made the Revolution inevitable. These principles had long been familiar to the educated classes through the teachings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Diderot. They formed the centre of interest in the salons of Paris. But they entered into the arena of practical politics when the disorder of the finances and the miseries of the people created conditions which forced the government to appeal to the nation through the States-General. Two streams of influence, one at home and the other abroad, converged in 1788 to form the torrent of revolutionary ideas which were destined to sweep away the forms and usages of the old régime.

The first was the work and teachings of Rousseau and especially his "Du Contrat Social," published in 1765. The ideas of this book, published during the end of the reign of Louis XV, when the evidences of misgovernment were everywhere recognised, and social and economic forces were undermining the monarchy, fell upon a soil prepared to receive his ideas. The first sentence of his book, "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains," awoke a responsive echo in multitudes groaning under the servitude of the feudal system.

His principles of the sovereignty of the people, equality of all

<sup>2</sup> Sieyès, "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat," Introduction, p. ii.

men, and civil liberty spread like wild-fire not only among the enlightened middle classes who were discontented with the deprivations and inequalities of the old régime, but also to some extent among the masses who were burdened with excessive taxation and oppressions. The "Gospel" of Jean Jacques became the watchword of the Revolution and its influence was paramount in determining many of its events.

De Tocqueville has written: "Such were the doctrines of natural equality of man, and the consequent abolition of all caste, class, or professional privileges, popular sovereignty, the paramount authority of the social body, the uniformity of rules. . . . These doctrines are not only the causes of the French Revolution; they are, so to speak, its substance; they constitute the most fundamental, the most durable, the truest portion of its work."<sup>3</sup>

While these ideas of Rousseau largely contributed to the formation of the revolutionary habit of mind, yet at the time he wrote, they had little effect upon public affairs or upon the government; but they prepared the people for impending changes, and, when the hour of Revolution struck, the minds of men were surging with democratic ideas.

The second influence which helped to swell the stream flowing in the direction of the Revolution was the example of democracy recently established in America. The effect of this example was paramount in the French Revolution and its influence can be traced in many stages of its development. From 1783 onward, not only the officers and nobility who took part in the war, but also the common soldiers who came back from America, were filled with ideas of liberty and democracy. The publication of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 electrified France and stirred public enthusiasm for the war. Lafayette has told us that it was the reading of this Declaration that decided him to enlist in the American cause. He came back to France at the close of the war with many of his brother officers imbued with ideas of liberty and equality. His democratic sympathies were so strong that he affected even its spirit in his dress and his speech, saying, "We and other Republicans." An anecdote which he relates about himself at this time shows the strength of his democratic opinions: "In the military reviews under Louis XVI, Lafayette was seen wearing the American uniform, of which the baldrick, according to a fairly common custom, was decorated with an emblem at the choice of each officer; and the king, having asked him an explanation of his, discovered that

<sup>3</sup>De Tocqueville, "Old Régime and the Revolution," p. 19.

this emblem was a tree of liberty planted above a crown and a broken sceptre." <sup>4</sup>

In 1783, he placed in his own house the Declaration of Independence and by its side a vacant frame which he said boldly was "awaiting the Declaration of the Rights of France." <sup>5</sup>

It may be too much to claim that Lafayette and his friends formed a republican group, but they were the centre of the liberal-minded nobles who looked forward to the time when France would have a Constitution based upon republican principles. The experience in America had had a profound effect upon such men as the Marquis de Noailles and the Lameths and they returned to France confirmed democrats. "It was America," writes Lord Acton, "that converted the aristocracy to the reforming policy and gave leaders to the Revolution." <sup>6</sup>

The enthusiasm for American ideas was seen in the numerous books and pamphlets which were published at this time. In 1785, the American state constitutions were published at Paris and had an enormous sale and created much excitement. Romilly, an Englishman of liberal ideas, who was in Paris at the time, speaking of this fact, says, "The American Constitutions were then recently published. I remember his (Franklin) reading some passages out of them and expressing surprise that the French Government had permitted the publication of them in France. They certainly produced a very great sensation at Paris, the effects of which were felt probably many years afterwards." <sup>7</sup>

The great influence of America undoubtedly was due to the fact that democracy was revealed not as a theory, but as a living example. Here in concrete form was seen the working of republican principles which were cherished by the enlightened classes in France. Of this effect, Condorcet wrote in 1789, "The human race had lost its title-deeds," said Voltaire, 'Montesquieu found them and restored them.' But it is not sufficient that those deeds be written in the books of philosophers and in the hearts of virtuous men. It must be possible for the ignorant and feeble men to read them in the example of a great people. America has given us the example. The State paper which declared their Independence is a sublime and simple exposition of rights so sacred and so long forgotten. In no nation have they been so well known nor preserved with such integrity." <sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> "Mémoires de Lafayette," Vol. III, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 197.

<sup>6</sup> Lord Acton, "Lectures on the French Revolution," p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> Rosenthal, "America and France," p. 106.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

It was that example that created the public opinion which sustained the Parlement of Paris in resisting the edicts of the ministry and the king in 1787 and inspired their declaration that no taxes were valid unless they were levied with the consent of Parlement. More significant of the same way of thinking was the spirit shown at the meeting of the notables held the same year. This Assembly of the Notables had been called together by the king to consider the financial state of the kingdom and to devise some plan to raise taxes. This body was composed of 144 of the leading nobles and lawyers of the state, but it had no legal standing and could act only in an advisory capacity. That the king convoked this Assembly was a recognition of the force of public opinion. While its discussions led to no results and only served to reveal the weakness of the government, yet it was marked by one very significant fact. At the close of the session in the bureau of the Comte d'Artois, Lafayette made the first demand for the calling of the States-General. "What, Monsieur," said the Comte d'Artois, "You ask for the convocation of the States-General?" "Yes, Monseigneur, and *even better than that.*" "You wish then that I write that M. de Lafayette made the motion to convoke the States-General, and carry it to the King?" "Yes, Monseigneur." And Lafayette adds, "The Prince had written the name Lafayette. The silence was general; and the idea which was then thrown out in advance, the expression of 'even better than the States-General,' that is to say, a National Assembly, did not appear then in the bureau, as in society, anything more than the vain expression of a thoughtless desire. This denomination of a National Assembly was adopted, as we know, at Versailles during the first meetings of the Constituent Assembly."<sup>9</sup>

That Lafayette had at this time another idea than that of invoking the States-General merely as a plan for equalising the taxation and reorganising the finances, is very evident. There is no doubt that his idea of calling for the States-General was to establish a Constitution based upon the Rights of Man and the sovereignty of the people. This purpose he had long cherished ever since his return from America.

In a letter written about the middle of June 1789, he alludes to this purpose. "At nineteen years of age I consecrated myself to the liberty of men and the destruction of despotism, as much as a feeble individual, like myself, could do. I departed for the New World, opposed by all, and aided by none. . . . It was

<sup>9</sup>"Mémoires de Lafayette," Vol. II, p. 177.



during my last voyage to America that I had the pleasure of seeing this Revolution completed and thinking already of that of France, I had said in a speech to Congress, printed everywhere except in the *Gazette de France*: 'This Revolution can serve as a lesson to oppressors and an example to the oppressed.' The disorder of the finances and the first assembly of the Nobles made me feel that the happy moment approached. You know that I was the first to raise the great principles of no taxation without the consent of the taxables; on individual liberty, on the necessity of the States-General. These principles I had proclaimed anew in my provincial assembly and I had refused subscriptions because they did not serve for the advancement of liberty. I had only thought of attacking the Government. . . . I had tried everything but civil war which I could have made, but which I feared the horrors. It was within a year that I made a plan of which the simplest points appeared extravagant, and which here within six months will be executed almost entirely, yes, almost entirely without the change of a single word. I have also made a Declaration of Rights, which Mr. Jefferson found so good that he has asked that it be sent to General Washington; and this Declaration, or almost all, will be the catechism of France."<sup>10</sup>

That these changes were brought about so quickly were due to the state of public opinion and to the unwise methods of handling the political situation by the ministers of the king.

When the Assembly of the Notables disbanded in May 1787, it assented to a tax upon land and upon stamps. The Parlement of Paris in July refused to register this tax upon stamps and passed a decree on the 16th opposing it on the ground that it "had never been charged by the people to place these taxes," and expressed 'the wish of seeing the nation assembled before the establishment of any new tax whatever.'"<sup>11</sup>

At the Lit de Justice held at Versailles on August the 6th, the Marquis d'Aligre, first president, "reiterated most earnestly the entreaty to supplicate His Majesty, for the maintenance of his authority, for the glory of his reign, for the establishment of his finances, that he would be pleased to grant the convocation of the Etats Généraux which alone could probe the profound wounds of his State.'"<sup>12</sup> In this demand the Parlement was sustained by the Court of Aides and the Chatelet of Paris. "The King, while reprimanding the agitation of 'his Parlements,' in

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 308, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Chassin, "Les Elections et les Cahiers de Paris," p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

commanding them 'to confine themselves to the functions which had been entrusted to them by his predecessors,' and 'to give to his subjects the example of fidelity and submission,' said: 'I need not have been urged to assemble the Notables of my Kingdom. I will never fear to find myself in the midst of my subjects. A King of France is never better than when he is surrounded by their love and fidelity. But it is for me alone to judge of the usefulness and the necessity of these Assemblies (the States-General), and I will never allow anyone to ask me for that which ought to be left to my wisdom and my love for the people whose interests are indissolubly linked with mine.'"<sup>13</sup>

The king also made a promise at this time that if the loans and taxes were passed by Parlement, he would convoke the States-General at the end of five years. This, however, did not appease the opposition of Parlement. The leaders in this opposition were the Abbé Sabathier, Fréteau, and Duval d'Espréménil, who proposed to register only the first decree and at the utmost the second of the successive loans, and pressed the king "to announce the convocation of the States-General for 1789."<sup>14</sup>

The decree of Parlement was followed on November 21, 1787, by the king sending into exile the Duc d'Orleans and two of the counsellors. The Parlement was summoned to Versailles to expunge the decree from its records. These actions were carried out in face of a strong opposition by the people. The controversy with Parlement had awakened much public interest and the people followed with increasing attention every stage in the controversy. The demand for the convocation of the States-General now became more insistent as the financial difficulties of the government increased. The Parlement of Paris continued to contest the legality of the Royal Séance of November the 19th, and it continued to speak of "ministerial despotism." Finally in the session of May 3, 1788, the Parlement passed a decree in which it protested "unanimously against any attack upon the principles of the French Monarchy, governed by the King according to the laws," and in the first rank of these principles it placed 'the right of the nation to grant subsidies freely, through the medium of the States-General regularly composed and convoked.'"<sup>15</sup>

This brought matters to a crisis. On the 5th of May, the Garde Française surrounded the Palace of Justice and the com-

<sup>13</sup> Chassin, "Les Elections et les Cahiers de Paris en 1788," p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

mandant of the king's guard arrested two of the counsellors, d'Espréménil and Montsabert. On the 8th, the Parlement was summoned to Versailles, and was ordered to pass the Cour Plénière, and among other matters, the king was made to say, "A great State must have one King, one law, one registration: a single Court, depositary of the common laws in all the Kingdom, and charged with their registration; lastly, the States-General must assemble not once, but every time that the needs of the State demand it."<sup>16</sup>

The Cour Plénière was installed on May 9th, but never sat because most of the Parlements rebelled against it and eight of them were sent into exile. This produced a storm of popular indignation and many municipalities and provinces were in a state of open rebellion and leagued together against "ministerial despotism," pressing their claims of their ancient privileges so far as to threaten to separate themselves from France."<sup>17</sup>

The province of Dauphiné took even more drastic action. "The 'citizens of the Three Orders,' in reconstituting the autonomy of their country reclaimed the rights of all Frenchmen; in order to force the meeting of the States-General, they gave to their Assemblies at Grenoble, at Vizille, at Romans the composition which the National Assembly ought to have, putting into practice the 'doubling of the Tiers' and 'the vote by head'; finally, before the Royal Convocation, proceeded to choose their thirty representatives (15 from the clergy and the Nobles, and 15 from the Tiers Etat) for the States-General of France."

In view of this opposition and the excitement of the public, the king and the ministers gave way and a decree of the Council of State was issued on August 8, 1788, announcing the assembling of the States-General in May, 1789. At the end of August, the ministry of Loménie de Brienne was dismissed in disgrace and Necker was called to undertake the ministry with the approbation and acclamations of the people. In the eighth article of the decree invoking the States-General, it was stated, "His majesty invites at the same time all the scholars and learned persons in his Kingdom, and particularly those who compose the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres of his good City of Paris, to address to M. le Garde des Sceaux all the references and memorials on the objects contained in the present decree."<sup>18</sup>

This opened the way for the pamphleteers, and a war of

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

pamphlets commenced which kindled into an inflammatory state the minds of the people.

All the different interests and rivalries came to the surface and the different classes and orders began a struggle for supremacy in the coming States-General. The controversy raged around the questions of the union of the orders and the voting by head and the forms under which the States-General should be organised. As Chassin said: "The 'electoral period' was opened in the midst of a tempest raised by the coup d'état of May 8th, by an appeal of the Government, which, on one side, roused and awoke all the rivalries and competitions of the Orders, in the provinces, cities, corporations, but, on the other hand, provoked this immense movement of pamphlets which, in preparing the cahiers and drawing up the programme of the future National Assembly, determined the French Revolution."<sup>19</sup>

Among a section of the enlightened middle class and the nobility, there developed a determined purpose to force from the States-General a constitution for France, but this desire was not shared by the mass of the people at this time. The people in the cities and towns and the peasantry in the country districts were concerned alone with the removal of the abuses of the feudal system, the reorganisation of the finances, and the removal of the inequalities which shut them out from all offices in the state.

But the ideas of liberty were everywhere prevalent, and the passion for equality which had seized upon the minds of the masses, foreshadowed a change in the forms of the government. Yet for the present moment public opinion was centred on the questions of the nature and composition of the States-General. It was more than one hundred and fifty years since the last States-General had met and the Tiers Etat exercised only a small rôle in that assembly. But now conditions and opinions had changed and the commons were in no mood to brook the dictation of the orders of the nobility and clergy. How to reconcile these clashing interests was the problem of the government. M. Necker had not the qualities of a great leader and was timid in deciding the questions at issue. To solve the questions which produced so much popular excitement, he called together again the Assembly of the Notables. They met in November 1788, and were divided into six bureaux. Unfortunately they decided that the States-General should conform as nearly as possible to the forms of 1614 and that it should be constituted by the three orders—the Nobles, the Clergy, and the Tiers Etat, the latter

<sup>19</sup> Chassin, "Les Elections et les Cahiers de Paris en 1788," p. 7.

comprising the Commons, and that they should vote by order and not by head.

It is significant that the bureau of Monsieur Comte de Provence, the king's brother, voted that the representation of the Tiers Etat should be doubled. The session of the notables was secret and the people waited with intense interest the results of their deliberations, and when their decision was announced, which placed the power in the States-General in the hands of the two orders, entrenched in privilege and prestige, there was great excitement and an outburst of indignation from the people. It was at once realised that if the orders voted separately and the representation was equal, that there would be no hope of equalising the taxation or abolishing the feudal abuses. All the power would be in the hands of the privileged classes.

It was at this time that a pamphlet appeared, published anonymously, but written by Dr. Guillotine, which was endorsed by the Six Bodies of Paris. This pamphlet stated the position of the Tiers Etat and assailed the claims of the nobility and the clergy.

In this pamphlet it was stated: "Every Frenchman has an equal right to defend his own property, whatever it may be, by himself, or by his representative.' 'Every Frenchman who is not present at the States-General has thus a right to be represented there, and no one has more right to be there than another.'"<sup>20</sup>

"It is expedient that the representative should have the same interest as the represented, and that he should not have a different one; otherwise, due to human weakness, he will sacrifice for his personal interest the interest of him whom he will represent, and that of his Order.' 'Thus an Ecclesiastic can only be represented by an Ecclesiastic, a Noble only by a Noble, a man of the Third Estate only by a man of the Third Estate, who is not dependent on either one of the two other Orders.'"<sup>21</sup>

In support of these premises, the author outlined his ideas on the composition of the States-General, concluding with the demands of the Third Estate as follows: "1. That the number of the representatives of the Tiers Etat to the States-General be at least equal to the total number of the representatives of the two other Orders together.'

"2. That in all the special assemblies, bureaux, intermediary commissions or others, the same composition be observed for each Order as in the General Assemblies.'

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

"3. That every time there will be a question of voting in all the assemblies, in the general as well as the special, the votes be counted by head, as was previously done several times in the States-General, and as is practiced, with universal approbation, in all the provincial assemblies.

"4. That the deputies of the Tiers Etat can only be chosen from that Order, and never among the ecclesiastics, the nobles, or those who actually enjoy the privileges of the Noblesse, unless by renouncing their privileges, they return voluntarily into the useful class of plebeians, their fathers, and inscribe themselves in the Order of the Tiers Etat.

"5. So that all these precautions must not be illusory, we demand that the representatives of the Tiers Etat be in proportion to the number of the represented; that it has, for example, one deputy to five thousand citizens, one elected by five thousand electors.'

"Equality of true representation in the National Assembly between the Order of the non-privileged, the Tiers Etat, on the one hand, and the two privileged Orders, the Clergy and the Noblesse united, on the other, so that justice be done for all; such is the object of the demand which we respectfully lay at the foot of the Throne.'" <sup>22</sup>

These ideas were deemed so radical that the Parlement of Paris issued a decree, on December 19th, against the author and the pamphlet was ordered suppressed.

About this time, Abbé Sieyès published his famous book, "What is the Tiers Etat?" This book created an immense sensation and had a great sale, 30,000 copies being sold in three weeks. Sieyès demanded the double representation and vote by head, and put forth the claim that the Tiers Etat represented the nation. He started off in his book with three questions: 1. "What is the Tiers Etat? Everything." 2. "What has it been hitherto? Nothing." 3. "What does it ask for? To be something."

Sieyès claimed that the Third Estate represented the nation and that the other orders only represented 200,000 individuals against a nation of twenty-five or twenty-six millions. He said: "Who then will dare to say that the Tiers Etat has not in itself all that which is necessary to form a complete nation? It is a strong and robust man whose arm is still in chains. If the privileged Order was removed the nation would not be something less, but something more. Thus, what is the Tiers? Everything, but everything fettered and oppressed. What would it be with-

<sup>22</sup> Chassin, "Les Elections et les Cahiers de Paris en 1788," pp. 45, 46.

out the privileged Order? Everything, but everything free and flourishing. Nothing can go on without it, everything would go on infinitely better without the others. It is not sufficient to have shown that the privileged, far from being useful to the nation, can only weaken and injure it, it is necessary still to prove that the noble Order cannot enter into the social organisation; that it can well be a burden to the nation, but that it cannot make a part of it." <sup>23</sup>

"We are not less unacquainted with the noble Order through its civil and political prerogatives. What is a nation? A body of associates living under one common law and represented by the same legislature. Is it not very certain that the noble Order has privileges, exemptions, even rights separate from the rights of the great body of citizens? In that way arises the common order, the common law. Thus its civil rights already make a people apart from the great nation. It is truly an *imperium in imperio*.

"With regard to its political rights, it also exercises them apart. It has its representatives, who are charged with nothing for the procuration of the people. The body of its deputies sit apart; and when it assembles in the same hall with the deputies of simple citizens, it is not the less true that its representation is essentially distinct and separate; it is foreign to the nation by its principle, since its mission does not come from the people, and by its object, since it consists, not in defending public interest, but private interest.

"Thus the Tiers embraces all that which belongs to the nation; and all that which is not the Tiers cannot regard itself as being of the nation. What is the Tiers? Everything." <sup>24</sup>

Sieyès also criticised M. Necker in calling together the notables to decide the questions between the orders; for they represented privilege, and not light and justice. "The attempts of the Ministry, as we have seen, cannot produce happy fruits in favour of the Tiers."

In accordance with the spirit of his age, Sieyès saw in the force of events and in the march of enlightenment the influence which would bring about these changes in the state. "The empire of reason advances more every day; it necessitates more and more the restitution of usurped rights. Sooner or later, it will be necessary for all classes to confine themselves within the limits of the social contract. Will that be to receive innumerable

<sup>23</sup> Sieyès, "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?" p. 30.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32.

advantages or to sacrifice them to despotism? Such is the true question. In the night of barbarism and of feudalism, the true relations of men have been destroyed, all nations overthrown, all justice corrupted; but at the rising of day, it is necessary that gothic absurdities disappear, that the remains of ancient ferocity fall and be destroyed. That is a sure thing."<sup>25</sup>

Sieyès' remarks upon the formation of a second chamber after the English model are of interest in view of the later discussions in the National Assembly. "Different interests have had time to form themselves in the Order of the Noblesse. It is not far from dividing itself into two parties. All those who belong to three or four hundred of the most distinguished families sigh after the establishment of an upper Chamber, after the example of England; their pride is nourished in the hope of no longer being confounded with the crowd of gentlemen. Thus, the High Noblesse would gladly consent to throw back into the Chamber of the Commons the remainder of the nobles with the generality of citizens.

"The Tiers will guard themselves, above all, from a system which would result in nothing less than to fill its chamber with men who have an interest so contrary to the common interest, a system which would replace it in impotence and oppression. There exists, in this respect, a real difference between England and France. In England, the privileged nobles are only those to whom the Constitution accords a part of the legislative power. All the other citizens are united in the same interest; and no privileged persons make separate Orders in the Chamber. If then they wish in France to unite the three Orders in one, it is necessary first of all to abolish all kinds of privilege. The noble and the priest must have no other interest except the common interest, and they must enjoy, by force of the law, only the rights of simple citizens."<sup>26</sup>

These views of Sieyès had a great effect upon the members of the Tiers Etat and did much to increase the desire that its representatives be equal to that of the other two orders. All intelligent men saw that the questions of taxation, reform of abuses, and the making of a constitution could only be achieved if the power in the States-General was given to the Tiers Etat.

When the decision of the Assembly of the Notables was announced, their opposition to the doubling of the number of the

<sup>25</sup> Sieyès, "Qu'est-ce que le Tiers Etat?" p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.



representatives of the Tiers Etat and against the vote by orders in common, and the rejection of vote by head, there was an outburst of popular indignation. Public opinion became so threatening that M. Necker, a timid and irresolute man, but fond of popularity, persuaded the king in the council of state held on December 23, 1788, to decide the question at issue in favour of the Tiers Etat. By this, it was decreed that the deputies to the States-General should be elected according to population and contributions from each district, and that the deputies of the Tiers Etat should be equal to that of the two other orders united. By this decision the king went over to the side of the people against the nobility and clergy.

Another question of equal importance was decided on the 25th of January, 1789, in regard to the form of the elections and the qualifications of the electors. By this decision, almost universal suffrage would prevail in the primary elections where the electors for the deputies to the States-General would be chosen. The extension of the base of elections to the masses in the country was a decision of momentous importance and fraught with serious consequences. What was the purpose of the king and his ministers in making this decision? It is hard to say. It has been suggested that they may have been influenced in appealing to the people to strengthen the power of the crown against the growing power of the middle classes, or that the ministers may have hoped that the common people, whose loyalty to the king was unquestioned, would rally around the throne and return deputies to the States-General who would be more amenable to the will of the court. M. Necker had not been in favour of calling the States-General, but since it had been decided, he seemed to have hoped that he could balance the parties in the States-General against each other, and through the diversity of interests he could play the rôle of arbitrator. He was soon, however, to have a rude awakening.

The middle class was struck with consternation when it received the news of the decree of January the 25th, relating to the extension of the suffrage. Realising the vital importance of this decision, it at once made plans to educate the electorate. All France was flooded with speakers and agitators who went into every community and hamlet to inform the people of their rights and to enlist them on the side of the Tiers Etat.

From that time until the elections, the communes and villages became centres of democratic agitation and the masses of the people awoke to a consciousness of their rights. If the king had

called upon the masses of the nation to counter-balance the power of the middle classes and strengthen the forces of the crown, he would have been soon undeceived. The new democracy, far from showing themselves subservient to the old régime, claimed with eagerness their new rights and their place in the new order as French citizens. While it is true that the primary elections were held only to select electors for the assemblies which would elect the deputies, yet the very act of voting at all made the people realise that the deputies to the States-General were their representatives and responsible to the people who chose them. Moreover, these elections were of immense influence in educating the people in the principles of democracy and establishing the great principle of the sovereignty of the people, and when the crisis arose between the king and the States-General, the people stood solidly behind their representatives.

It was during these election contests that the people became familiar with the idea of the need of a Constitution and began to express their discontent through the cahiers. When the deputies of the Tiers Etat assembled at Versailles, they had the proud consciousness that they represented more than five millions of Frenchmen, men who formed the élite of the nation as well as the great mass of the peasantry. "I ought to recall," writes Chassin, "that the cahiers were prepared by the intellectual élite of the nation, written by the commissioners, elected by each popular assembly, noble and ecclesiastical, discussed, compared, and finally approved by the mass of the electors deliberating and voting in full liberty. The complaints and views which are expressed are then really the complaints and views of five or six millions of French. In consequence, having found condemned by them in advance everything that the Constituents have abolished or proclaimed, everything that they have created, it would prove that our first National Assembly has acted conformably to the maturely reflective will of France. And, far from having exceeded their powers, the immortal authors of the Declaration of Rights and the Constitution of 1791 have retained, on this side, the imperative mandates and the instructions which they had received from their constituents."<sup>27</sup>

The elections, however, did not take place without considerable opposition from the nobility, who tried to overawe the people and to misrepresent the ideas of the Tiers Etat. In Franche-Comté, the states composed of the three orders were divided into two parties and the two higher orders endeavoured to impress the

<sup>27</sup> Chassin, "Génie de la Révolution Française," p. 199.

people that the Tiers Etat was usurping its powers. The Parlement sided with the orders and issued a decree in which it said: "Considering that the fermentation which reigns in the Kingdom, principally in the cities, is excited by a multitude of writings capable of leading the people into error; that the opinions and audacious assertions, hazarded by individuals without character and without authority, tend to destroy all subordination, to raise insurrections against legitimate authority, to engender intestine war, and to shake, perhaps even to overturn the Monarchy.

"That the Chamber of the Tiers Etat has aspired to an equality of voice and suffrage with the two other Chambers united, against the invariably followed custom; . . . that they would like to destroy the immunity of fiefs; that this immunity of the province is not a personal privilege; that it is a real right, attached to the land by positive laws; and by a possession of more than a thousand years; that the most sacred rights; all those of property between the hands of the citizens; even those of the succession of the throne, have no other foundation than a similar possession.' " <sup>28</sup>

The court concluded by passing a decree against the claims of the Tiers Etat. The people at Besançon rose up in insurrection against this decree. The magistrates were attacked and forced to flee. In Brittany, matters were even worse. There were open conflicts between the nobility and the people, and the young men of the Tiers Etat organised themselves into a military body to protect their rights and to secure the carrying out of the election laws. The trouble commenced at the meeting of the provincial states at Rennes and spread to Brest and Angers. The young men of these cities issued manifestoes which showed the temper of the public mind and the determination of the Tiers Etat to maintain their rights. The decree of the young men of Angers on February 4, 1789, reveals that agitation which convulsed the province. This decree of Angers is so characteristic of the general spirit and the controversy of the time between the nobility and the people that it is worth quoting.

"We, young men of the city of Angers, informed by public clamour and the communication which came to us of the decrees given by the students of law and of medicine, and the members of the *bazoche*, on the attacks committed in Bretagne against young citizens, by members of the noblesse, assembled on the ground for holding a State Assembly; consider that, just as

<sup>28</sup> Buchez et Roux, "Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 286.

French liberty reaches its regeneration, he is not a true citizen who does not view with indignation the aristocracy which some nobles would like to establish; that such a form of government, which leads to slavery, can only be regarded as a manifest violation of the most holy rights of nature, and that it is above all essentially contrary to the ancient and true constitution of the empire of the Franks; that it is a sacred duty for all those who still love their country, to oppose, with all the energy of which they are capable, an innovation so disastrous and so disgraceful; that it is of the utmost importance for the safety and honour of the nation, that similar outrages be immediately repressed; we have deliberated and unanimously decreed that in the capacity of men and citizens, we are and always will be ready to fly to the support of our unjustly oppressed brothers, without swerving from our respect of the laws, and the fidelity which we have sworn to our Prince; that solely desiring the recovery of our inalienable and imprescriptible rights, we form only a protest against the intolerable usurpations, and we shall only be opposed to the revolting pretensions which some members of the State would dare to raise against the incontestable and legitimate authority of the nation.' " 29

This fermentation and spirit of unrest were not confined to a few provinces but extended all over France. The nation was seething with excitement and agitation and all kinds of utopias and theories were put forward in the name of liberty and equality. The nobility of Provence issued a statement in which they said: "The new system tending to overturn the principles of the monarchy, has established equality in ranks and properties, to the destruction of the dignity of the noblesse." 30

It was this conflict which foreshadowed a stormy meeting of the States-General. Malouet, the intendant of Toulon, tells us that he had contemplated refusing an election to the States-General until he saw the excited state of the people and the danger from inexperienced men controlling the destiny of the nation. He says, "I was at the moment of giving in my resignation when I saw the small bourgeois, the practitioners, the lawyers without any instruction in public affairs, citing the 'Contrat Social,' declaiming with vehemence against tyranny and abuses, and proposing a constitution. I recognized that such extravagances would lead to disaster in the great tribunal, and I

<sup>29</sup>Buchez et Roux, "Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 291.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 192.

came to Paris strongly discontented with myself, with my fellow-citizens, and with the ministry who had precipitated us into such an abyss." <sup>31</sup>

This statement of Malouet gives us a good idea of the agitated state of public opinion and the spirit of innovation which had taken hold of the minds of the people; but it is through the cahiers that we can best see the direction towards which public opinion was moving. In the cahiers of the clergy, they proclaimed "the establishment of a Constitution founded on these general principles; that the French Government is monarchical; that the person of the King is sacred and inviolable; that the crown is hereditary; that the nation is composed of three equal orders, and that the legislative power belongs to the States-General.

"There are those who demand that before all things, before any deliberation on the tax, a general and fundamental law be promulgated which would state and declare positively the principal rights of the citizens, of the provinces, of the nation and of the different orders which compose it. There are others who wish that every regulation be only provisional, as long as it has not been approved of by the States." <sup>32</sup> They demanded "that the Assembly be composed of deputies freely and equally elected"; that the taxes be equally shared and that all privileges in this respect be renounced. On the question of voting by order and by head, the clergy were divided; "but the greater number of cahiers prescribed that on general subjects, such as the tax, they will vote only by head; and by Order, when they work on special questions for the interest of each class." <sup>33</sup>

The cahiers of the nobility, however, are of great interest because they reveal to what extent liberal ideas had permeated some of the members of this order. The nobility were liberal on many questions, but conservative on subjects dealing with the rights of their order. There was no unanimity among them, and they were divided on many important issues. The cahiers insisted before all that a Declaration of the Rights of Man be made, which would constitute their liberty, their properties, and their security; but "they insist particularly on this fact, that the Convocation of the States-General is not an innovation, but the re-establishment of an ancient custom; that the French have a Constitution which is less a question of changing than of re-

<sup>31</sup> Malouet, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 245.

<sup>32</sup> Buchez et Roux, "Histoire Parlementaire," Vol. I, p. 325.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.

establishing its primitive purity." They demanded safeguards for personal liberty, abolition of *lettres de cachet*, irregular courts, liberty of trade, of religion, and of the press; inviolability of property; they dealt with questions of education and the care of the poor; the abolition of feudal dues and oppressions. On the question of eligibility of offices they departed from the spirit of reform. In respect to the clergy, the nobles demanded that they no longer be exempt from taxation and that the monastic orders be reformed, and in some cases they asked that the tithes be abolished and in most cases that the tithes be made less oppressive to agriculture.

The nobles recognised the right of all Frenchmen to take part in the government, but they would restrict this right to distinctions of rank. "Opinions differ as to the ways of taking votes in the States-General; a majority advocating voting by Orders, but others think that this rule ought not to apply to questions of taxation, while some object to it altogether."

They demanded also the maintenance of royalty, the preservation of legislative, judicial, and executive powers in the hands of the king, but at the same time, they demanded periodic meetings of the States-General, fundamental laws to guard the rights of the nation, the sanction of the States-General for the imposition of taxes. They were opposed to the right of the ministers to dissolve the Assembly and the right of any deputy to take office under the government; they also thought that the persons of the deputies were inviolable; that all sittings should be public, and "that the nation be made a spectator by printing the debates." In the division of powers between the king and the States-General, they demanded that no law should take effect until it was sanctioned by both the king and the States-General and that the fixing of taxes belonged exclusively to that body.

All these demands give a striking picture of the temper of mind which actuated the nobility at the meeting of the States-General and of the extent that they were prepared to go in matters of reform and the reconstruction of the social and political order.

As De Tocqueville says: "The most striking feature which no extract can reproduce, is the perfect harmony which exists between these noblemen and their age. They are imbued with its spirit and speak its language. They speak of 'the inalienable rights of man,' principles inherent in the 'social compact.' In treating of individuals, they speak of their rights; in alluding to

society, they talk of its duties. Political principles seem to them 'as absolute as moral truths, both the one and the other, having reason for its basis.' When they want to abolish the remains of serfdom, they say they must 'efface the last traces of human degradation.' They sometimes call Louis XVI a 'citizen king,' and constantly allude to the crime of 'high-treason against the nation.' Like other Frenchmen, they regard France as a trial field—a sort of political model farm, in which everything should be tried, everything turned upside down, except the little spot in which their political privileges grow; to their honour, it may be said that they did not wholly spare that spot. In a word, it is seen from these cahiers that the only thing the nobles lacked to effect the Revolution was the rank of commoners."<sup>34</sup>

The cahiers of the Tiers Etat had much in common with those of the other two orders, but with many striking differences. They were unanimous in demanding that government officers be forbidden from interfering in the elections and that the kingdom be divided into districts and the number of deputies for each district be regulated by its population and contributions. They also demanded that the deputies to the States-General be considered not as representing special powers, but "as representing the entire nation"; that the deliberations be by head and not by order; and some cahiers of Dijon, Dax, Saint-Sever, Bayonne say, "that the deputies of the Tiers Etat represent twenty-four millions of men, who can and must always speak of themselves as the National Assembly, representing themselves to the King, and acting in effect with the title of National Assembly, in concert with those of the Noblesse and of the Clergy who wish to reunite with them."<sup>35</sup>

But it is at Paris, the centre of agitation where the most enlightened among the Tiers Etat are in control, that the great principles of liberty and equality are embodied in the cahiers. They began by expressly enjoining upon their deputies "not to consent to any subsidy, to any loan, until the declaration of the rights of the nation be passed into law, and the first bases of the Constitution be agreed to and assured." Then they drew up a Declaration of Rights in which they stated: "In every political society, all men have equal rights; all power emanates from the nation, and can only be exercised for its happiness; the general will makes the law; the public force ensures its execution; the

<sup>34</sup> De Tocqueville, "The Old Régime and the Revolution," p. 317. Notes.

<sup>35</sup> "Histoire Parlementaire," Vol. I, p. 331.

nation alone concedes the subsidy"; and it ended with these words, "The Declaration of these natural, civil, and political rights, such as will be decreed by the States-General, should become the National Charter and the base of the French Government." <sup>36</sup>

The electors of Paris also drew up the form of a Constitution which contained many of the articles afterwards embodied in that of the Constituent Assembly; and they urged that "the States-General assemble henceforth at Paris, in a public edifice destined for this use; on the front will be written: Palais des Etats Généraux; and on the soil of the Bastille destroyed and demolished, will be established a public place, in the midst of which will be raised a column of noble and simple architecture, with this inscription: To Louis XVI, restorer of public liberty." <sup>37</sup>

Owing to a dispute covering three months, between the provost of Paris, chief of the Châtelet, and the provost of merchants, as to the form and manner of the elections, they were delayed and did not take place until the 20th of April and were not finished until May 18th. In consequence of this delay, the deputies from Paris were not present at the opening sessions of the States-General, but as soon as they appeared, headed by Sieyès, who was the last deputy elected, they made their influence felt along radical lines. The cahiers were the subject of much dispute and were not completed and sent to the States-General until June 11, 1789.

While this controversy raged, many pamphlets were issued against the limitation of the suffrage to those paying a small tax which excluded the workingmen and reduced the electorate to 25,000 men out of a city of a million inhabitants. In the criticism of this system, many radical ideas were launched which were to be advocated later and which, at the time, fostered the spirit of democracy. In one pamphlet, addressed to the electors of the deputies of Paris, it was proposed to enact universal suffrage. "It is very nearly true that there is a third of the population who have not been consulted on its interests, and who are without direct defenders in the Assembly of the representatives of the nation. . . . That is to be discarded from the nature of political societies, from the intention of the King, from the constituent right of the nation, from justice, from reason, and from the public utility, that of not having called the labouring

<sup>36</sup> "Histoire Parlementaire," Vol. I, p. 336.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 351.



class of society, this class which composes a third of the general population of the kingdom, to concur in the Assembly of the States-General." <sup>38</sup>

On their side the nobility and the clergy were not inactive, but had been exerting all their influence to secure deputies who would resist the tendencies towards innovation. Under the leadership of the Comte d'Artois they had organised their forces to resist any concessions except in matters of taxation. It was under these circumstances that the States-General opened and all the political forecasts predicted a stormy session.

<sup>38</sup> Chassin, Vol. I, p. 469.

## CHAPTER II

### CLEARING THE GROUND FOR DEMOCRACY: THE STATES-GENERAL

**A**MID this popular ferment and clash of opposing interests and parties, the States-General met at Versailles on the 5th of May, 1789. The session was opened with imposing ceremonies in the Salle de Menus with all the gorgeousness and splendour of the old régime. The king entered the hall, followed by the queen, her maids of honour, the royal princes, the great officials of the state, and the court attendants, and ascended the throne, which was "raised three steps, covered with a violet tapestry with fleurs-de-lis of gold; two cushions of the same under his feet; above a canopy of the same colour, likewise with fleurs-de-lis of gold." The queen was seated on a chair on the second step of the stage, with her maids of honour, the chevalier of honour, the first equerry, and the officer of the guard standing behind her. Around her were marshalled the royal princes and princesses, and below in the semicircle at the end of the hall in which was placed the throne were gathered the ministers, officers of state, and dignitaries of France. On the right of the throne were assembled the Order of the Nobility, bedecked in white plumes and all the splendour of their order; on the left, the Order of the Clergy, dressed in their robes of office, the higher clergy being distinguished by their scarlet robes and the richness of their apparel. In the lower centre of the hall were assembled the deputies of the Tiers Etat, clothed in the plain black robes of the law and marked off from the other two orders by the sombreness of their appearance. "The places which they call still the Tiers Etat, whose simplicity contrasted with the sumptuousness of all the rest," and thus served to make the deputies of the people feel their inferiority. This distinction in place and dress was not an accident, but was the result of a carefully designed plan to follow, as nearly as the state of public opinion would permit, the old customs of subserviency and subjection of the States-General of 1614.

An incident had occurred a few days before which was a bad

omen for the spirit of union among the orders. At the reception granted by the king to the deputies of the three orders, the master of ceremonies, De Brezé, had admitted the deputies to the king by orders. The nobility and the clergy had been admitted to the royal presence by throwing open both sides of the door; but when it came to the deputies of the Tiers Etat, only one-half of the door was opened and they were made to feel their subordination to the other two orders. This incident was not without its effect upon the minds of the deputies and cooled the enthusiasm with which they had looked forward to the opening of the States-General. As representatives of the nation, the deputies had been enjoined to admit of no distinctions of ceremony or etiquette at the meeting of the States-General; and when the king had ended his address, and covered himself, "immediately the first signal of public liberty was given. Contrary to the ancient usage, the deputies of the Tiers Etat covered themselves as those of the first orders." At once a murmur of disapproval arose among the deputies of the higher orders, and the king, to relieve the situation, removed his hat, and his example was followed by all the deputies. This incident presaged a new spirit and was recognized as an outward sign of ushering in the new age of the Rights of Man.

It is doubtful whether the king or his ministers realised the force of the new opinions and their danger to the monarchy. The king showed in his opening speech at the States-General that he had no idea of the dangers which beset his throne or the extent to which the revolutionary spirit had possessed men's minds; and that he looked forward to the States-General as the panacea to solve all his evils. But it is clear from the events which preceded this meeting, that the Revolution was accomplished in thought before it broke out in the arena of action. The only question was how far it would go and where it might be arrested. Should the king take the leadership of the Revolution or should he leave it to the conflict of opposing interests and antagonistic forces which were concentrated in the gathering of the States-General? Undoubtedly the excitement over the elections and the fermentation over the drawing up of the cahiers had alarmed the king and the court; but there was an easy complacency among the ministers, and especially on the part of M. Necker, that he would be able to play one party against the other and so neutralise the effect of the cahiers and restrain the radical demands. This may explain his indecision and hesitation in deciding not to settle the vital questions of the union

of orders and the voting in common, before the opening of the States-General.

Moreover, the hesitation and timidity of M. Necker at this time was probably due, on the one hand, to his desire to play the rôle of arbitrator between the opposing forces, and, on the other, to his fear of offending the aristocracy and the party of the court. Malouet, who represented the moderate party in the Tiers Etat, strongly advised M. Necker, before the opening of the States-General, to present some plan, in the name of the king, to guide the deliberations of that body and to decide by royal authority the disputed questions of the union of the orders and the voting in common; but M. Necker preferred to leave everything to chance, hoping in the end to be called in to settle the dispute. He thus created a dangerous situation and unhappily lost for the crown the initiative in guiding the Revolution.

The first five weeks of the session of the States-General were marked by inaction, due to the determination of the Tiers Etat not to constitute itself as a deliberative body until the nobility and clergy agreed to meet them and to vote in common. This division between the three orders led to many conferences, but without results; until, finally, the Tiers Etat, realising that delay was dangerous in view of the threatening state of public feeling, decided on the momentous step of organising themselves, after asking the other two orders to join with them, as the Assembly of the nation.

To understand this action we must consider the temper of mind and the nature of opinions which pervaded the Tiers Etat. When they first met in May, they were strangers to each other; but during the interval of five weeks, opinions had been forming and they had come to feel a general agreement of ideas and aims. They were agreed in opposition to the other two orders and in their determination not to dissolve until they had made a constitution. What was the precise nature of the constitution, possibly, they did not know; but the tenor of the cahiers pointed the way towards certain methods of reform in matters of taxation and feudal abuses.

Among the deputies, there was, undoubtedly, a considerable element who were enamoured of republican principles and who were determined to assert the sovereignty of the people in all questions of legislation. There was also a small element who intended, if events led that way, to go much further in the direction of democracy. "There were doubtless some," writes Ma-

louet, "zealots of Jean Jacques and of the American Revolution, who had the project in end of overturning the orders and of giving to every one an approach to the throne through the forms of democratic principles."

The spirit of this group was sufficiently strong to alarm Mirabeau and to induce him to try, through the medium of Malouet, to get into touch with M. Necker. Mirabeau wished to learn if the ministry had a plan of a constitution. He said, "If this plan is compatible with the monarchical system, I pledge myself to sustain it and to employ all my abilities, all my influence to hinder the invasion of democracy which advances upon us."<sup>1</sup> Mirabeau was now, as always, a strong supporter of the monarchy and this fact does much to explain his subsequent conduct. His interview with M. Necker is of much importance; for if it had resulted in an understanding between the two statesmen, it would undoubtedly have changed the trend of the Revolution. But, unfortunately, it was only with great difficulty that Malouet persuaded M. Necker to grant an interview to Mirabeau. Their meeting was cold and formal and Necker treated Mirabeau with a disdain which so irritated him that, after a few words, Mirabeau left the room without broaching the subject of his visit. Going at once to the Assembly, "he passed, crimson with rage, by my side," says Malouet, "and said to me, in striding over one of our benches: 'Your man is a fool, he will hear from me.' This is the only word that I have had with him up to the time of his Presidency."<sup>2</sup>

Thus by a coldness of manner, M. Necker threw away the one opportunity which came to him to guide the Revolution through the one man who, at that time, could dominate the Assembly.

The drama of the Revolution opened with the act of the Tiers Etat constituting itself the National Assembly and taking the lead in those events which culminated in the insurrection of Paris in July 1789. This act marked the passing of the initiative and power from the king to the Assembly. The steps by which this result was brought about were gradual; but the attitude of the Commons alarmed the king and threw him into the arms of the aristocracy; thus he abdicated his position as leader of the liberal party of the nation, and went over to the forces of reaction. This produced three marked crises during the first

<sup>1</sup> Malouet, "Mémoires de Malouet," Vol. I, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

four months of the session of the National Assembly. At the end of each crisis, it might have been possible to arrest the progress of the Revolution and to establish a constitutional government; but all the efforts of the moderate men in the Assembly in this direction were each time thwarted by the unwise decisions taken by the court and the acquiescence of the king.

However, making all due allowance for the prevalence of republican ideas and the influence of the ideas of Rousseau in the Assembly, there is no evidence that the Assembly sought to reduce the power of the king to impotence or to threaten the monarchy. On the contrary, the extremists were few in number in the Assembly and men of moderate opinions were at this time in control of that body.

Undoubtedly there was a dangerous factor in the state of public opinion outside the Assembly, and especially at Paris. The Parisians had not been passive spectators of what transpired in the Assembly during the first five weeks. They had seen with growing impatience the inaction of the States-General and were bringing public pressure to bear upon the Tiers Etat to take some decisive action. It was the common opinion at this time that the deputies were delegates of their constituents and subject to their mandates. The people watched with jealous eyes the opinions and votes of their deputies. The public had been admitted to the gallery of the great hall of the States-General and did not hesitate to express their approval or disapproval of the speeches of the deputies.

Mounier relates that when a motion was made to exclude the public from the hall, a deputy exclaimed, "How dare they propose to exclude from this place our constituents, our masters?" This happened as early as the twenty-eighth of May. Mounier also complained that the opponents of any popular measure were "marked by the populace as sold to the noblesse; that they were outraged by the galleries, their names sent to Paris, and few members had sufficient courage or sufficient integrity to sustain their true opinions."<sup>3</sup>

Allowing for the fact that Mounier had left the Assembly in disgust in October 1789, and for his endeavour to justify his conduct, it is natural that he should exaggerate the defects of the Assembly. Undoubtedly the people of Paris were suspicious of every act of the deputies. It was a critical time and all kinds of underhand methods were used by the nobility to influence the conduct of the deputies. Any wavering on the side

<sup>3</sup> Mounier, "Recherches," Vol. I, p. 291.

of the Tiers Etat, any compromise on the principle of voting in common, would have wrecked any hope of a constitution based upon the sovereignty of the people. It was unfortunate, however, as events have proved, that the public, in the first weeks at Versailles, were allowed to influence the proceedings of the Tiers Etat, but the deputies were dependent upon the force of public opinion behind them in their conflict with the aristocracy.

It has been customary for some writers of royalist sympathies to speak in derogatory terms of the character of the States-General and to contend that the Tiers Etat was controlled by men inexperienced in statesmanship and advocates of wild theories. Gouverneur Morris, writing of the Assembly in January 1790, speaks of it in disparaging terms: "It may be divided into three parts, one called the aristocrats—another which has no name, but which consists of all sorts of people really friends of good government. The third is composed of what is called here 'enragés,' that is, madmen. These are the most numerous, and are of that class which in America is known by the name of pettifogging lawyers, together with a host of curates and many of those persons who in all revolutions throng to the standard of change because they are not well.'" <sup>4</sup>

But Morris, who had been appointed ambassador to France in the fall of 1789 in succession to Jefferson, was a prejudiced witness, being a man of strong monarchical ideas, a member of the party of Hamilton, and with little sympathy for democracy. Lafayette wrote to Washington, complaining of Morris' appointment, saying that his want of sympathy with democratic principles disqualified him for the position of minister to France. Moreover, Morris wrote after the Assembly had lost many of its eminent members by emigration; when the force of events had carried the Assembly much further along the line of Revolution; and when the intrigues of the royalist party had driven more moderate men into the camp of the extremists. But at this period, June 1789, the state of mind in the Tiers Etat was very different. Their loyalty to the king was unquestioned and they believed that he was sincerely united with them in the desire to make the Constitution. By degrees they were driven into opposition by the arrogance and pretensions of the privileged orders and by the mismanagement of the ministry in its relations with the States-General. It was the lack of initiative of the ministers of the king in deciding the questions at issue between the orders which forced the Tiers Etat to take the decisive

<sup>4</sup> Lecky, "England in the Eighteenth Century," Vol. VI, p. 352.

step which determined the trend of the Revolution. And this step created the first crisis. It threw the king into opposition and led him to change his policy; it overturned the plans of Necker for a liberal constitution and induced the king to go over to the aristocracy against the people; and finally it led to the royal session of June 23d, so fatal to the royal authority and to the monarchy.

The events which led up to this change are dramatic and consummated the Revolution. After a period of inaction of five weeks, the Tiers Etat or the Commons, as Target on May 10th had proposed that they should be called, realised that the time had come to organise their body. Many manœuvres had been employed by the two orders to force the position of the Commons. Finally, the clergy sent a deputation to the Commons urging them to organise the States-Général in view of the distress and famine among the people. This proposal was received with murmurs in the Commons, who suspected some snare to place them in an invidious position before the people. After a long debate, the Commons passed a decree, in which they said: "Imbued with the same duties as you, touched even unto tears by the public misfortunes, we pray you, we adjure you, to unite with us in the common hall, at the same moment, to advise the means to remedy these misfortunes."<sup>5</sup>

On June 10th, the noblesse having again affirmed its resolution to maintain the verification by orders, Sieyès rose and made a speech, in which he urged that the Commons proceed immediately to organise themselves without regard to the other two orders, and concluded by saying that the Commons "summon by deputation, the clergy and the noblesse to repair immediately to the hall at the call of the bailliage and proceed in turn to the verification and that such who do not appear will be declared defaulters." These last words were considered too arbitrary and were changed to "proceed, whether the members of the two privileged orders were absent or present."<sup>6</sup>

This verification of powers occupied them until June 15th. The Commons knew that they had a strong support for their action among many members in the two first orders. In the clergy, 119 had voted in favour of uniting with the Commons, and in the noblesse, 44 against 197 had voted the same way. These votes, if added to those of the Commons, would have given them a clear majority in the States-General. "By dint of

<sup>5</sup> Toulangeon, "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.



repeating that the question was being decided, they decided it. In vain, during the discussion, deputations from the two orders came to inform them that they were considering their answer to the invitation of the Tiers. These tardy condescensions had little success upon the men engaged in the public business, where opinion, once established, rarely retraces its steps; the doyen of the Tiers replied impartially to one, as to the other, that they were waiting in the common hall."<sup>7</sup>

While the bishops and higher dignitaries of the clergy maintained an opposition to the Commons, the curés who came up from the people and who were imbued with a personal resentment against the upper ranks of the clergy, because the higher offices were given in accordance with rank and birth, favoured the Commons.

"The new order of things," writes Toulangeon, "which had been proclaimed, promised a more equal division of wealth and of titles. A considerable number of bishops had been successful in appointing themselves to the assemblies of the Baliwicks, . . . and they did not treat with enough tact the clergy, from whom they believed the power had passed. When the scission was made, the bishops found they were in a minority in their chamber."<sup>8</sup>

It was significant of the way things were tending that eleven of the clergy on the fifteenth of June had united with the Commons and were enrolled with them. On the same day the question arose as to the name which the Commons should take to designate their character as representatives of the nation. Mirabeau proposed that the Commons should call itself the "Representatives of the French People." Mounier proposed: "the legitimate Assembly of the representatives of the major part of the nation, working in the absence of the minor part." Barrère proposed: "the representatives of the largest portion of the French in the Assembly." Others, that they were "the Representatives of almost the whole French people." And another, "Representatives of 24 millions of men." Finally, Legrand proposed the "National Assembly." The session was marked by much excitement and a long discussion in view of the important step that the Commons were taking. Sieyès, who had listened quietly to the discussion and who had probably instigated Legrand to make the proposition, finally arose, and proposed that the name should be the "National Assembly." The name was voted by the Com-

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 54.

mons with an enormous majority. "This word, 'National Assembly,' decided many great questions; from the beginning it made no distinction in all the Orders which it united; it accustomed public opinion to see the nation assembled; it stamped a noble character on the mass of the representatives; and perhaps all, which was dared under the title, that continually recalled its origin, its force and its rights, would not have been attempted by the same assembly, under a less exact appellation."<sup>9</sup>

But this momentous decision was not taken without foreseeing some of its consequences. The question immediately arose whether the king would sanction their decree. It is characteristic of the state of mind in the Assembly that the Jansenist Camus said, "We are what we are. Can the veto change the unalterable truth? Can the royal sanction change the order of things and alter their nature?" This saying roused the ire of Mirabeau, who exclaimed, "I believe that the veto of the King is so necessary, that I would rather live in Constantinople than in France if I did not have it; yes, I declare I know nothing more terrible than a sovereign aristocracy of six hundred persons, who declare themselves inviolable to-day, hereditary to-morrow, and end as all aristocracies of all countries, encroaching upon everything."<sup>10</sup>

This address of Mirabeau's, it was said, was received "with a thunder of indignation, with a tempest of insults and imprecations." It was a sure sign that the radical element was in control of the Assembly and was determined to sustain their position as national representatives and to exercise their legislative powers. The vote for the name of "National Assembly" was 491 to 90. The Assembly by this vote went over to the policy of Sieyès. Malouet and Mounier voted in the negative. Mirabeau stayed at home and did not vote, being fearful of the action of the Assembly. On the following day, when Sieyès was received in the Assembly with thunders of applause, and all the deputies from a feeling of respect rose to receive him, Mirabeau said, "How contemptible! Do they imagine that all is over? I should not be surprised if civil war were the fruit of their unwise decree."<sup>11</sup>

The list of the members who voted against the decree was printed and held up to the people, "as traitors sold to the aristocracy." As Mirabeau's name did not appear upon this list,

<sup>9</sup>Toulangeon, "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 57.

<sup>10</sup>Michelet, "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 266.

<sup>11</sup>Dumont, "Recollections of Mirabeau," p. 69.

"his popularity did not suffer at the Palais Royal, whilst Malouet, Mounier, and several others who had maintained the same opinion less openly were delivered over to popular censure."<sup>12</sup>

The Assembly at once assumed sovereign powers and passed a decree in regard to taxation and the consolidation of the national debt. The decree reads: "Considering that in reality the contributions, such as are actually collected in the kingdom, not having been consented to by the nation, are all illegal and in consequence void, in their creation, extension, and prorogation;

"And declares, by the unanimity of suffrages, to consent provisionally for the nation, that the taxes and contributions, although illegally established and collected, will continue to be levied in the same manner as they have previously been; and this, only, till the day of the first separation of this Assembly, from whatever cause that may arise;

"After this day, the National Assembly ordains and decrees, that all levies of taxes and contributions of every kind, which have not been especially, formally, and freely accorded by the Assembly, will cease entirely throughout all the provinces of the kingdom, whatever be the form of their administration.

"The Assembly hastens to declare, that as soon as it will have determined, in concert with His Majesty, upon the principles of national regeneration, it will apply itself to the examination and consolidation of the public debt, putting henceforth the creditors of the State under the safe-guard of the honour and loyalty of the French nation."<sup>13</sup>

This audacious decree in which the Assembly assumed the powers which had only been exercised by the king, produced a storm of indignation among the noblesse and the party of the court. The ferment at Versailles and later in the nation was tremendous. Some of the deputies doubted whether the nation would support the Assembly in its stand.

Dumont tells us that "the nobles were confounded at the audacity of the Tiers Etat. They, who had access to the King, told him that all would be lost if he did not oppose this usurpation on the part of the Commons. The debates in the chamber of the nobility were scenes of infuriated madness. The decree of the Tiers Etat was termed an outrage, treachery, high treason. The frenzy was at its height, and the King ought to have called all his faithful subjects to defend him, put himself at the head

<sup>12</sup> Dumont, "Recollections of Mirabeau," p. 69.

<sup>13</sup> "Mémoires de Bailly," Vol. I, p. 168.

of his troops, ordered the seditious to be arrested, and dissolved the Assembly."<sup>14</sup>

But the king was not equal to such decisive action, and it is questionable whether, if he had decided upon such a movement, he would have been supported by the nation or the army. Necker had noticed even in the previous January that the troops were not to be relied upon in an emergency.

The king, still under the influence of Necker and his ministers, counselled moderation in dealing with the Assembly. Necker presented to the Council of State a form of a Constitution which the king would present to the States-General at a Royal Séance to be called on June 22d. It was a plan to organise a representative government with two chambers, to abolish all privileges in matters of taxation, and admit all citizens to the civil and military offices. It was said that everything was decided upon between the king and his ministers and they were just getting ready to depart, when the king was called away. He went out, desiring his ministers to await his return. Montmorin turned to Necker and said, "It is the Queen and all is over."

It was the influence of the queen that turned the king aside from his purpose of giving to France what would have been designated then as a liberal Constitution, and which would have changed the destiny of the monarchy. The circumstances which led to this change were almost accidental. Necker had kept secret the nature of the Constitution and had merely given orders to prepare the large hall where the Commons met for the Royal Séance, but he had sent no word to the leaders of the Assembly of his purpose.

On the twentieth of June, the deputies with Bailly at their head came to the Salle de Menus and found the doors barred against them with a cordon of soldiers. There was much excitement among the deputies, for they thought that this fact portended dissolution. But in spite of the royal command, they determined to hold their meeting. Where to meet, they did not know. As it was raining, Dr. Guillotine suggested a near-by place, the Jeu de Paume, the tennis court where the nobles had been accustomed to play. At once the deputies were gathered there and a guard was formed to keep out all intruders. Bailly read the message from the king interdicting the meeting of the Assembly until June 22d. It was heard with increasing indignation. The letter read: "The King, having resolved to hold a royal séance with the States-General on the 22d of June, the

<sup>14</sup>Dumont, p. 69.

preparations to be made in the three halls which serve for the assembly of the orders, necessitate that these assemblies be suspended until after the holding of the said séance. His Majesty will make known, by a new proclamation, the hour when he will go on Monday to the Assembly of the States." Bailly remarks, "that it was not thus that we ought to be notified of the Royal Séance. This conduct of the ministry was strange; it proved how inconsiderate they were, how little idea they had of that body with whom they had to deal, and the manner in which it ought to be treated."<sup>15</sup>

The ministry had claimed that the king had a right to suspend the session of the Commons. This they disputed. The presence of troops which surrounded the Salle de Menus had alarmed the deputies and made them suspicious of the intentions of the court. Thus, when the deputies came together in the Jeu de Paume, the more ardent spirits among them proposed that the Assembly should go at once to Paris, in a body and on foot. This dangerous proposal was brushed aside, for it would have involved separation from the king and would probably have been the signal for civil war.

In the midst of the excitement, Mounier, who had lost some of his influence in the last few days by his vote in the National Assembly, and who desired to regain his position there, proposed that the deputies take an oath never to separate until the Constitution should be made for France. This idea was received with acclamations, and, after a short discussion, the following oath was taken by all the deputies with one exception: "The National Assembly, considering that it is called upon to determine the Constitution of the kingdom, to effect the regeneration of public order, and to maintain the true principles of the monarchy, holds that nothing can prevent it from continuing its deliberations in whatever place it may be forced to assemble; and in short, wheresoever its members are united, there is the National Assembly;

"Decreed; that all the members of this Assembly take immediately a solemn oath never to separate, and to reassemble wheresoever the circumstances will demand it, until the Constitution of the kingdom be established and secured upon solid foundations; and that the said oath being taken, all the members, and each one in particular, will confirm with their signatures this unshakeable resolution."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bailly, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 181.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

The significance of this oath was that it united all the members in a common policy and carried the moderate party over to the idea of "radical and indefinite change" which marked henceforth the course of the Revolution. It induced the queen and the court to bring pressure upon the king to reject the Constitution of Necker, which at that time was being considered in the council of his ministers. Moreover, this oath strengthened the party of radicals in the Assembly and made them more than ever unwilling to listen to counsels of moderation.

Jefferson relates an interesting conference which he had with the leaders of the Assembly at this time, and the advice which he gave them to accept the concessions of the king. The news that M. Necker's plan had been overturned in the council in conjunction with the queen, the Comte d'Artois, and the party of the court leaked out. "This change of plans," writes Jefferson, "was immediately whispered without doors. The noblesse were in triumph; the people in consternation. I was quite alarmed at this state of things. . . . I was much acquainted with the leading patriots of the Assembly; I urged, most strenuously, an immediate compromise to secure what the government was now ready to yield, and to trust to future occasions for what might still be wanting. It was well understood that the king would grant, at this time—1. Freedom of the person by Habeas Corpus; 2. Freedom of conscience; 3. Freedom of the Press; 4. Trial by jury; 5. A representative Legislature; 6. Annual meetings; 7. The origination of laws; 8. The exclusive right of taxation and appropriations; 9. The responsibility of ministers; and with the exercise of these powers they could obtain, in the future, whatever might be further necessary to improve and preserve their constitution. They thought otherwise, however, and events have proved their lamentable error. . . . They were unconscious of (for who could foresee?) the melancholy sequel of their well-meant perseverance."<sup>17</sup>

These words are often quoted from Jefferson in support of the theory that he condemned the patriots at that time; but there are two facts which are overlooked. First, the ground of his suggestion for a compromise was based upon the belief that the Assembly was uncertain whether the troops might not be used against them by the king. He says, "The soldiery had not yet indicated which side they would take, and that which they should support would be sure to prevail." Secondly, the basis for accepting the concessions of the government was based upon

<sup>17</sup> Jefferson, "Works," Vol. I, p. 93.

the Constitution which Necker was supposed to offer at the Royal Séance of June 22d. Jefferson in a letter written to Mr. Jay on June 20th, says, "It was intimated to them that day (June 20th), privately, that the proceedings of the Séance Royal would be favourable to them."<sup>18</sup>

But it was after this that the Royal Séance was postponed from June 22d to the 23d, owing to a change of the plans of Necker in the council of the king. Jefferson, writing to Mr. Jay on the 24th, the day after the session, describes just what took place. "The heads of the aristocracy saw that all was lost without violent exertions. The king was still at Marly. Nobody was permitted to approach him but their friends. He was assailed by lies in all shapes. He was made to believe that the Commons were going to absolve the army from their oath of fidelity to him, and to raise their pay. . . . They procured a committee to be held consisting of the King and his ministers, to which Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois should be admitted. At this committee, the latter attacked Mr. Necker personally, arraigned his plans, and proposed one which some of his tools had put into his hands. Mr. Necker, whose characteristic is want of firmness, was brow-beaten and intimidated, and the King shaken. He determined that the two plans should be deliberated on the next day, and the Séance Royale put off a day longer. This encouraged a fiercer attack on Mr. Necker the next day; his plan was totally dislocated, and that of the Comte d'Artois inserted into it. He and Monsieur de Montmorin offered their resignations, which were refused; the Comte d'Artois saying to Mr. Necker, 'No, Sir, you must be kept as the hostage; we hold you responsible for all the ill which shall happen.'"<sup>19</sup>

This plan of the Comte d'Artois was presented by the king at the Royal Séance of June 23d. The session was marked by all the royal splendour of the first meeting in May and everything was done to heighten the effect of the majesty of the king. The first two orders were admitted first by the main doors into the hall and were seated upon their benches before the Commons were admitted. The Commons had been kept waiting for some time before the side door of the entrance, in the rain, and it was only after repeated demands by its president, Bailly, that the door was finally opened and the deputies filed into the hall.

"On the day of the royal session," writes Dumont, "I went

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

to the palace to witness the splendid pageant. I well remember the hostile and triumphant looks of many individuals, on their way to the château. They thought their victory sure. I saw the King's ministers, whose emotions, though they affected unconcern, were but too apparent. The attitude of the Count d'Artois was haughty; the King seemed pensive and sad. The crowd was great, and the silence profound. When the King got into his carriage, there were rolling of drums and flourishes of trumpets, but not a sign of approbation from the people, and fear alone prevented an explosion of popular discontent. At length the vast procession began to move. The royal household and his officers, the guards, infantry and cavalry, proceeded towards the hall of the States-General, in which the three orders assembled, were defying each other with looks of mute indignation, and impatiently awaiting the result of this important day. Never had passions so violent and so diametrically opposed to each other been before pent up in so small a space. The ceremony was precisely the same as on the opening of the States-General, but what a difference was there in the feelings of the assembly! The day of the first ceremony was a national festival—the regeneration of political freedom; but now the same pomp which delighted every eye was covered with a veil of terror. The sumptuous dresses of the nobles, the magnificence of regal state, and the splendour of royal pageantry seemed the accompaniment of a funeral procession.”<sup>20</sup>

The session was marked by the absence of Necker and by the proud and peremptory manner of the king in addressing the States-General. After a few words, the king gave the new constitution to the Garde des-sceaux, who after speaking to the king on his knees, according to the ordinary custom, rose and said, “The King orders you to be covered.” “I put on my hat,” said Bailly, “a number of deputies of the Commons did the same; neither the noblesse nor the clergy covered themselves. Without doubt, with their frivolous love of distinctions, they no longer cared to cover themselves in the presence of the King when we were covered. In putting on my hat, I had wished to maintain and to mark a right. When I saw the majority uncovered, I removed it, and everybody remained uncovered.”<sup>21</sup>

The reading of the Constitution followed. Two articles will give an idea of its general character. First, “The King wishes that the ancient distinctions of the three Orders of the State be

<sup>20</sup> Dumont, “Recollections,” p. 75.

<sup>21</sup> “Mémoires de Bailly,” Vol. I, p. 210.



conserved in their entirety, as essentially binding to the Constitution of His Kingdom; that the deputies freely elected by each of the three Orders, forming three chambers, deliberating by Order, and being able, with the approbation of the Sovereign, to convene to deliberate in common, can alone be considered as forming the body of the representatives of the nation. Consequently, the King has declared void the deliberations taken by the deputies of the order of the Tiers Etat, the 17th of this month, as well as those which have followed since, illegal and unconstitutional." Secondly, "His Majesty having exhorted, for the safety of the State, the three Orders to unite only during this session of the States, for deliberating in common on the affairs of general utility, wishes to make known his intentions as to the manner it should be conducted. Affairs which will be especially excluded from being treated in common, are those which concern the ancient and constitutional rights of the three Orders, the form of the Constitution to be given to future States-Generals, seigneurial and feudal properties, beneficial rights, and honourary prerogatives, of the two first Orders."<sup>22</sup>

Two articles in the declaration of the intentions of the King explain the spirit of the Constitution. First, "The King wishes, that in order to assure the stability of the diverse expenses of the State, the proper arrangements to attain this end should be indicated to him by the States-General, and his Majesty will adopt them, if they accord with the royal dignity and the indispensable celerity for the public service." Secondly, "All properties, without exception, will be constantly respected, and his Majesty includes expressly under the name of property, tithes, franchise, rents, feudal and seignorial rights and duties, and generally all the rights and prerogatives, useful or honourary, attached to the land and the fiefs, or pertaining to individuals."<sup>23</sup>

The king, at the close of the reading, again spoke and said: "You have come, gentlemen, to hear the result of my wishes and my views. They are conformable to a lively desire which I have, of working for the public good; and if, by a fatality far from my expectations, you abandon me in so glorious an enterprise, I, alone, will seek the good of my people; I, alone, will consider myself their true representative, and knowing your cahiers, knowing the perfect accord which exists between the general wishes of the nation, and my beneficent intentions, I shall have all the confidence which ought to inspire so rare a

<sup>22</sup> "Mémoires de Bailly," Vol. I, pp. 452-3. Notes.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 455-6. Notes.

harmony; I shall march towards the goal which I wish to attain, with all the courage and firmness with which it ought to inspire me.

"Reflect, gentlemen, that not one of your projects, not one of your dispositions can have the force of law without my special approbation. Thus, I am the natural guarantee of your respective rights; all orders of the State may repose on my equitable impartiality. All mistrust on your part will be a great injustice. It is I who have hitherto been doing everything for the happiness of my people, and it is rare, perhaps, that the only ambition of a Sovereign has been to obtain from his subjects a disposition in them to receive his benefits.

"I order you, gentlemen, to separate immediately, and to return to-morrow morning, each to the chamber appropriate to his Order, and resume your meetings. I consequently order the grand master of ceremonies to prepare the halls." <sup>24</sup>

The king then retired, followed by all the nobles and a part of the clergy. "The Commons remained in their places, in tranquillity and in silence"; but a prey to many fears and apprehensive what the future might have in store for them. Then the grand master of ceremonies, De Brezé, approached President Bailly and said: "Monsieur, you have heard the order of the King?" And Bailly replied, "Monsieur, the Assembly is adjourned after the Royal Séance; I cannot separate it unless it has deliberated upon it." "Is this your response, and am I to announce that to the King?" "Yes, Monsieur." And Bailly writes, "And I added to my colleagues who were around me: 'I believe that the nation, assembled, cannot receive orders.' It has been said and repeated that I had made this response to M. de Brezé. The official answer to his message is that which I have just reported. I respected the King too much to make such an answer; I knew too well the deference which a president owed to the Assembly to involve it thus without its consent." <sup>25</sup>

But Mirabeau, realising the greatness of the occasion, arose, and turning to De Brezé, said to him with calmness, but with majesty, "I declare to you that if you have been charged to drive us out from here, you must ask for orders to employ force; for we shall leave our places only by the power of bayonets." <sup>26</sup>

It was said that De Brezé, stupefied by the majesty of the reply, retired walking backwards, as a sort of homage to the As-

<sup>24</sup> "Mémoires de Bailly," Vol. I, p. 213.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

<sup>26</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. II, p. 291.

sembly, an act which heretofore had only been shown to the king.<sup>27</sup>

De Brezé carried the account of the resistance of the Commons to the king. "This prince, already tired of the rôle which he had been forced to play, and who from the beginning had been very indifferent to everything, replied, that 'if the gentlemen of the Tiers did not wish to leave the hall, let them stay there.'"<sup>28</sup>

The deputies had greeted the statement of Mirabeau with cries of, "Such is the view of the Assembly." Then Camus demanded the confirmation of all the previous decrees. And when a deputy proposed that they consider on the morrow the resolutions of the king, Barnave cried out, "You have declared what you are; you have no need of sanction." And Sieyès uttered with simplicity the words which afterwards became famous, "We are to-day what we were yesterday."

This scene marked the crisis of the Revolution and was the first step in that policy by which the Assembly asserted its majesty and power and set the sovereignty of the people above that of the king. The Assembly, however, realised that the times were critical and that at any moment they might be attacked by the troops. It was under this danger that it was proposed to declare the inviolability of the members. Mirabeau had made the motion to this effect, which led to a great discussion. Bailly opposed it on the ground that it was unnecessary, but Mirabeau replied with heat, "You do not know to what you expose yourself! If you do not carry out the decree, sixty deputies, and you among the first, will be arrested to-night."<sup>29</sup> It was learned, later, that the Garde du Corps which had accompanied the king to the palace was proceeding on the road to Saint-Germain, when it received orders to turn bridle and go to Versailles. It arrived at a gallop, but the Assembly had adjourned after passing the decree of the inviolability of the deputies. This decree reads: "The National Assembly declares that the person of each of the deputies is inviolable; that all individuals, all corporations, tribunals, courts or commissions who dare during or after the present session to prosecute, investigate, arrest or cause to be arrested, detain or cause to be detained, a deputy for reason of any motions, advice, opinions or discourses, made by him to the States-General, . . . are infamous and traitors to the nation and guilty of capital crimes. The National Assembly

<sup>27</sup> "Mémoires de Mirabeau," p. 218. Note.

<sup>28</sup> C. E. Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup> "Mémoires de Bailly," Vol. I, p. 217.

decrees, that in the aforesaid case, it will take all necessary measures to investigate, prosecute, and punish all those who will be the authors, instigators, or executioners." <sup>30</sup>

The Royal Séance, which had begun with such magnificence and display of royal authority, had ended in placing the Assembly in a stronger position; but no one knew what the next day would bring forth. The presence of the troops who filled the streets of Versailles and all the roads to Paris foreboded no good. When the news of the Séance was carried to Paris, the excitement among the people was immense.

The next day the excitement increased and the electors of the sixty districts, who had remained in spite of the orders of the ministry to disband, began to assemble in their halls. These electors were composed of the wealthy bourgeoisie and enlightened men of that class. Under the leadership of Abbé Fauchet and Bonneville, they assembled at the Hôtel de Ville and passed the following resolutions: 1. The demand for a national guard; 2. The organisation of a true commune; 3. An address to the king for the departure of the troops, the liberty of the Assembly, and for the revocation of the coup d'état of the 23d. But more important for the cause of the Revolution was the defection of the regiment of the Gardes-Française. "The regiment of the French guards," writes Delaure, "generally more instructed than the rest of the army, and discontented with its colonel, embraced with ardour the new opinions. One of its *ci-devant* officers, the Marquis de Valady, went from barracks to barracks to enlighten the soldiers on what they owed to their country. This mission had its effect; the chiefs soon perceived it and consigned, from the 20th of June, the guards to the barracks. This rigour, without evident motive, excited their minds and gave rise to the spirit of insubordination in the soldiers.

"During the days of the 25th and 26th of June, they went out from their barracks, appeared without arms at the Palais Royal, crying, 'Vive le Tiers Etat!' There they were received with applause, refreshments, money, and even bills of the treasury. All the troops who were then stationed at Paris received a similar treatment at the Palais Royal: they were asked if they would have the courage to dip their hands in the blood of their fellow-citizens, their friends, their brothers; the soldiers replied with cries of 'Vive la nation!' " <sup>31</sup>

It was evident that large money interests were back of the

<sup>30</sup> "Mémoires de Bailly," Vol. I, p. 217.

<sup>31</sup> Delaure, Vol. I, p. 76.

revolutionary movement and that the creditors of the state, who represented a powerful body at Paris, had been working for some time in opposition to the court.

Another effect of the Royal Séance of June 23d was to create the fear that, if the nobility triumphed, they would declare a national bankruptcy and then "the people will rejoice at this," Dumont tells us, 'because the government will reduce taxes; there will then be no further difficulty and the cause of freedom will be lost.' . . . and the words, States-General, Constitution, and sovereignty of the people, totally forgotten."<sup>32</sup>

Under these circumstances, the creditors of the state and the wealthy bourgeoisie were determined to support the Assembly at all hazards and they fomented and excited the agitation of the people and the effervescence of the citizens of Paris. The winning over of the regiment of the French guards sealed their victory and the Palais Royal became the centre of agitation and menaces against the nobility which frightened the king, the queen, and the court.

In the meantime, the majority of the clergy to the number of 164, including Talleyrand, and twenty-five prelates, and forty-seven of the nobility with the Duc d'Orleans at their head, had gone over to the Commons. This increased the numbers of the Commons to over eight hundred. The majority of the noblesse and a minority of the clergy still continued to hold out and to meet as separate orders. But on the 27th, the king addressed a letter to the president of the dissenting clergy, Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld, urging them to unite with the Assembly for the good of the nation and as an evidence of their attachment to himself. At the same time, the king wrote to the Duc de Luxembourg, the president of the nobility, making the same request and urging the union with the Assembly "to give to the King this mark of its respect and to the nation the proofs of its patriotism."

The secret of this request was due to the discovery that the troops could not be relied upon, and the ministers feared, from the fulminations of the Palais Royal and of the threats against the nobility, that the king's life was in danger. The alarm of the court was extreme; for the agitation of the people and the growing insubordination of the soldiery was becoming more and more evident every day. It was not alone the French guards who were affected, but also all the French troops throughout the kingdom.

<sup>32</sup> Dumont, "Recollections of Mirabeau," p. 85.

The nobility, however, were not disposed to accede at once to the request of the king. While a portion of the nobles had gone over to the Commons, yet the majority were still determined to preserve their separate order. Lafayette, the Lameths, the Duc de Liancourt, the Vicomte de Noailles, and some others who sympathised with the minority still stayed in the hall of the nobles that they might watch them and report their proceedings.

"The Vicomte de Noailles came and went, assured the nobles of the provinces that the reunion would only be momentary, that they ought not to be alarmed, that the troops were being pushed on, that in fifteen days things would change; and the Vicomte of Noailles was one of the most zealous partisans of the Revolution! It was thus that the Court was betrayed by those on whom it ought most to have been able to rely, saw its projects denounced to the Commons before even they were definitely decreed." <sup>33</sup>

But the king, still alarmed by the public hostility to the nobles and the threats of danger to himself, sent another letter more pressing than the first, urging the nobles to unite with the Commons. When the Duc de Luxembourg read this to the Assembly of the nobles, one of them, the Marquis of Saint-Simon, cried out, advancing into the midst of the hall, "The King has told us that his life is menaced, let us run to the chateau, let us form a rampart of our bodies." This idea was received with enthusiasm by the assembly of the nobles and the Duc de Luxembourg had hard work to restrain their ardour and enthusiasm. He pointed out the consequences of such an imprudent step and the embarrassment which it would cause the king, placed between the people and the noblesse. "'It is no longer a question to deliberate on,' said the duke. 'The person of the King is in danger! Who of us would dare to hesitate a single instant?' At these words, all rose up tumultuously, the minority of the clergy joined to the majority of the noblesse, the two Orders with the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and the Duc de Luxembourg, their presidents, at their head, entered the hall of the States-General in silence." <sup>34</sup>

When it was reported to the people that the two orders had united with the Commons, the effect was unprecedented and the people were carried away with the wildest enthusiasm. "They assembled about the palace," writes Jefferson, "demanded the King and Queen, who came, and showed themselves in the balcony.

<sup>33</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

They rent the skies with cries of 'vive le roy, vive la reine.' They called for the Dauphin, who was also produced, and was the subject of new acclamations. After feasting themselves and the royal family with this tumultuary reconciliation, they went to the house of M. Necker and M. de Montmorin, with shouts of thankfulness and affection. Similar emotions of joy took place in Paris, and, at this moment, the triumph of the Tiers is considered complete."<sup>35</sup>

The reconciliation of the king was complete, but it was purchased by the abdication of the royal authority, Mirabeau, who was always a strong advocate of the royal authority, discerned that things might go too far if they were subjected to the vacillation and weakness of the king, and, turning to a friend he said, "The King has taken the road to the scaffold."

It was the courage and firmness of the Assembly, sustained by the public opinion of the nation and of Paris, backed by the defection of the French guards, which determined the victory. The first crisis of the Revolution was over; but it remained to be seen whether it could be arrested at this point. That the Revolution had advanced so far was due to the mismanagement of the ministers and the passing of the king from the side of the people to the aristocracy. At a fatal moment the king overthrew the plan of Necker and accepted the plan of the Comte d'Artois and the queen, based upon the despotism of the monarchy and dependent upon the display and use of force. But the king had seized a weapon which he never had the courage to apply. The fear of civil war paralysed him and his weapon was broken in his hand.

The crisis had revealed the strength of the democracy and the power of the bourgeoisie when united with the people. But there was still time for the king to lead the nation in making the Constitution and to give legal form to the accomplished fact of the authority of the Assembly. He was extremely popular with the people and they considered that he had been misled by his advisers and was still the "best of kings." Had the king accepted the new authority of the Assembly and co-operated willingly with it, the Revolution might have been contained within orderly limits. The bourgeoisie needed a king and had no desire to call upon the masses of the people beyond what was necessary to curb the power of the nobles. Moreover, men of moderate opinions still held command of the Assembly, and reinforced by the clergy and the nobility, might have directed

<sup>35</sup> Jefferson, Vol. III, p. 65.

affairs towards a stable form of government in which the king might still have retained much of his authority. At the same time it must be recognised that the crisis had given rise to dangerous tendencies. The radicals among the deputies were determined to break the power of the nobility and dissolve their order. The dangers under which the deputies had been placed were forgotten in the moment of victory.

"Instead of being dismayed with what has passed," writes Jefferson, "they seem to rise in their demands and some of them to consider the erasing of every vestige of difference of Order as indispensable to the establishment and preservation of a good Constitution. I apprehend there is more courage than calculation in this project."<sup>36</sup>

At this time we know that the Assembly contained many deputies who were disciples of Rousseau and a large number who were anxious to establish a Constitution upon republican principles which would reduce the king to the first magistrate. The Breton Club was organised at Versailles with such men for leaders as the radical deputies from Bretagne, Chapelier, and Glaizen, together with Sieyès, Pétion, Barnave, and Mirabeau. Lafayette was in constant consultation with this club and adopted its principles. They called themselves the "Friends of the Constitution," and at the club they laid their plans to direct the National Assembly. This club, transported later to Paris, met in the monastery of the Jacobins, becoming the famous club of that name. The union of the first two orders with the Assembly had only served to complicate the situation, and to throw the great questions of taxation and feudal abuses into the arena of debate. It is true that the Commons had now the majority and the prestige which goes with victory, and in the end its will would prevail, but only after a severe conflict. The king's sanction was still essential, and his position was as yet indeterminate. Nevertheless, everything was in favour of a peaceful solution. Public opinion was tranquil and the people had not been drawn to any large extent into the struggle.

Jefferson, writing to Mr. Jay at this time, had said, "This great crisis being now over, I shall not have matter interesting enough to trouble you with, as often as I have done lately."<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately for the king, he was under the influence of those who would concede nothing and who desired only to dissolve the Assembly and overawe the people. This policy led to the

<sup>36</sup> Jefferson, Vol. III, p. 63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.



second crisis of the Revolution, a crisis which was fraught with peril to the throne and arrayed the forces of democracy against the monarchy. Its first results were to lead to the organization of a municipal government at Paris, based upon a middle-class electorate; to the calling in of the people to sustain the Assembly; to the creation of a spirit of disorder and riot in the provinces; and finally to the destruction of feudal privileges and rights. From that time the Revolution went forward under the impulse of forces outside the Assembly and its destructive tendencies gained more and more the ascendancy.

The crisis was brought on by the decision of the king's council to bring up to Versailles the foreign regiments, stationed on the frontier. Ferrières reveals the real object of this step when he says, "Thirty regiments marched on Paris. The pretext was the public tranquillity; the real object, the dissolution of the States."<sup>38</sup>

Lafayette relates a curious incident concerning this decision. He says, "In consequence of the Séance Royal of June 23, the Queen, irritated by the reception given to M. Necker by the public after his absence, cried out in her cabinet, in the presence of her intimate friends, 'Il faut des troupes, il faut des troupes.' She sent for the Prince de Condé, who was also of the opinion that troops were necessary. Then orders were given; the troops arrived and precipitated by their presence the downfall of the royal authority."<sup>39</sup>

In the beginning of July, these troops, with 20,000 more on the way equipped with numerous trains of artillery, were assembled in and around Paris, between that city and Versailles. This gathering of the troops seemed to the Assembly to portend some plot on the part of the court. The Assembly became alarmed and sent a message to the king, requesting the removal of the troops. The king returned an evasive answer, stating that the troops were necessary to maintain public order.

On the 8th of July, Mirabeau made a motion to send a message again to the king demanding the removal of the troops. It was moved that the message be sent to the bureau for consideration, but Lafayette objected and moved for an immediate vote on the question by the Assembly. The vote was carried in the affirmative and Mirabeau was instructed to draw up an address to the king. This address was admirable and was published and sent to Paris, where it exercised a large influence upon the

<sup>38</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> "Mémoires de Lafayette," Vol. II, p. 310. Notes.

events of the next few days. It aligned the people of Paris on the side of the Assembly and prepared them for decisive action when the crisis arrived. This address, so important in the history of the Revolution, is worthy of being quoted in its essential parts. It reads:

"Sire, You have invited the National Assembly to bear witness to you of its confidence: that fulfills its dearest wish. We come to lay before Your Majesty our most vivid fears; if we had an object in it, if we had the weakness of fearing for ourselves, your goodness would still deign to reassure us, and even, in blaming us for having doubted your intentions, you would welcome our anxiety, you would dispel its cause, you would not leave the position of the National Assembly in uncertainty.

"But, Sire, we do not implore your protection; that would be offensive to your justice. The fears we have conceived, we dare to say, are coloured with the purest patriotism, with the interests of our electors, with the public tranquillity, with the happiness of our dear Monarch who, in making the road to felicity smooth for us, well merits to walk there himself without an obstacle.

"Behold, Sire, in the affection of your heart lies the true safety of France. When the troops were advancing from everywhere, camps were forming around us, the capital was surrounded, we asked ourselves with astonishment: Is the King distrustful of the fidelity of his people? If he had doubted it, would he not have poured into our hearts his paternal grief? What means this menacing appearance? Where are the enemies of the King, who must be subjugated? Where are the rebels, the plotters, who must be subdued? An unanimous voice answers in the capital and throughout the kingdom: '*Nous chérissons notre roi; nous bénissons le ciel du don qu'il nous a fait dans son amour.*'

"Sire, the religion of Your Majesty can only be questioned under the pretext of the public good. If those who have given their advice to our King had sufficient confidence in their principles to express them to us, this moment would lead to the loftiest triumph of truth.

"The State has nothing to fear except the bad principles which even dare to surround the throne, which do not respect the pure conscience of the most virtuous of Princes. And, Sire, how could you be deceived by them and doubt the attachment and love of your subjects? Have you shed their blood? Have you been

cruel and implacable? Have you abused justice? Do the people impute these evils to you? Do they name you in these calamities? Could they have told you that the people are impatient of your rule? That they are weary of the sceptre of the Bourbons? No, no, they have not done so; calumny is not so absurd; it seeks a few truths to colour its baseness.

"Your Majesty has recently seen all he could do for his people. Obedience is re-established in the troubled capital; prisoners put at liberty by the multitude have returned to their chains, and public order, which perhaps would have cost torrents of blood, if force had been employed, has been re-established by a single word from your mouth; but this word was a word of peace; it was the expression of your heart, and your subjects have made it their glory never to resist it. How glorious it is to guide this empire! The empire of Louis IX, Louis XII, Henry IV; it alone is worthy of you.

"We should deceive you, Sire, if we did not add, under the impulse of our present circumstances, that this empire of peace and order is the only possible one for France. France will not suffer anyone to abuse the best of Kings, and to turn him away, by sinister views, from the noble plan which he himself has outlined. You have called us to determine the Constitution in concert with you, to effect the regeneration of the kingdom; the National Assembly comes to declare solemnly to you that your wishes will be accomplished, that your promises will not be in vain, that snares, difficulties, terrors will not hinder its advance, will not intimidate its courage.

"Whence, then, is the danger from the troops? . . .

"The danger, Sire, is pressing, is universal, is beyond the calculation of human prudence.

"There is danger for the people of the provinces. Once alarmed for their liberty, they no longer recognise any bridle to curb it; distance alone increases everything, exaggerates everything, doubles their uncertainty, exasperates, and envenoms them.

"There is danger for the capital. With what attention will the people, in the midst of want and tormented with cruel agonies, see the remains of their subsistence disputed by a crowd of menacing soldiers? The presence of the troops will excite, stir up, and produce universal fermentation and the first act of violence, exerted under the pretext of keeping order, will commence a horrible series of misfortunes.

"There is danger for the troops." French soldiers, near the

centre of discussion, participating in the passions as in the interests of the people, may forget that a vow has made them soldiers and remember that nature has made them men.

"The danger, Sire, menaces the labours which are our first duty, and which will not have a complete success, a true permanence, until the people regard themselves as entirely free. Besides there is contagion in passionate movements; we are only men; the distrust of ourselves, the fear of appearing feeble, may lead beyond this end; we shall, besides, be beset by violent and unmeasured counsels, and calm reason, tranquil wisdom will not prevail in the midst of tumult, disorders, and factious scenes.

"The danger, Sire, is still more terrible, and you can judge of its extent by the sudden fear which has brought us before you; great revolutions have been from causes less signal; more than one fatal enterprise has been started in a less sinister and less formidable manner.

"Do not believe those who speak lightly of the nation, and who only know how to represent it to you according to their views, sometimes as insolent, rebellious, seditious; sometimes as submissive, docile under the yoke, prompt to bend its head to receive it; these two pictures are equally false. Always ready to obey you, Sire, because you command in the name of the law, our fidelity is without limit. Ready to resist all the arbitrary commands of those who abuse your name, because they are enemies of the law, only our fidelity orders this resistance; and we shall always be honoured to merit the reproaches which our firm attitude brings upon us.

"Sire, we implore you in the name of the country, in the name of your happiness and your glory, to send back your soldiers to the posts from which your councillors took them. Send back this artillery destined to cover our frontiers; send back above all the foreign troops; these allies which we pay to defend and not to trouble our firesides. Your Majesty has no need of them. Ah, why does a King adored by twenty-five millions of Frenchmen hasten at a great cost to surround his throne by some thousands of foreigners? Sire, in the midst of your children, be guarded by their love; the deputies of the nation are called to consecrate with you the eminent rights of the kingdom on an immutable foundation of liberty for the people; but when they fulfil their duty, when they yield to their reason, to their sentiments, will you expose them to the suspicion of having yielded to fear? Ah, the authority which all hearts submit to you is the only pure, the only unshakable one; it is the just return for your

benefactions and the immortal appendage of princes whose model you will be." <sup>40</sup>

To this noble appeal of the Assembly, the king returned a cold refusal to remove the troops, reiterating his previous statement that the troops were necessary to maintain order, and closing with this rather sarcastic remark, "If, however, the necessary presence of the troops in the environs of Paris still cause umbrage, I shall undertake, on the request of the Assembly, to transfer the States-General to Noyon or Soisson, and I shall go to Compiègne so as to maintain the communication, which ought to take place between the Assembly and myself." <sup>41</sup>

This reply satisfied nobody and the Assembly suspected a snare. To remove the Assembly to Soisson would be to place it between the army of Paris and that of the frontier. The peril of dissolution became now more imminent and secret measures were concerted to enlighten Paris and the provinces on the plans of the court. These designs were painted in the darkest colours. "They said that France would become again a prey to the courtiers, the nobles, and the priests. This yoke, reimposed by force, would be heavier, weightier than ever. The monarch disengaged from his promises, unrestrained by the dissolution of the States, in the plenitude of his power, would know no other limits to his will than the incommensurable limits of his bizarre and mobile fantasies." <sup>42</sup>

The creditors of the state were alarmed and feared the court would declare national bankruptcy, so they organised to support the National Assembly and used their credit and money for this purpose. The plans for a rising were formed, if the court should take any action which threatened the Assembly. Ferrières tells us "that Paris, this city agitated by all the passions, moved by all the interests, peopled by men having everything to hope and nothing to fear from a revolution, was the central point where this movement went forth. The Court, accustomed to see Paris trembling under a lieutenant of police, and under a guard of eight hundred men on horse-back, had no suspicion of a resistance. It could not foresee anything, nor calculate anything; it did not even think of assuring itself of the soldiers whom it wished to use as instruments of its designs." <sup>43</sup>

The tragedy of the situation was, that the king had had presented to him two plans, by Foulon, one of which was to work

<sup>40</sup> Delaure, "Esquisses Historiques de la Révolution," Vol. I, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>42</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 71.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

with the Assembly and lead the Revolution. But this would involve many personal sacrifices.

The other plan was an appeal to force; this the king chose and by the dismissal of Necker precipitated the crisis and brought on the rising of Paris and the overthrow of his royal authority.

In the meantime, the Assembly was occupied with making the Constitution. Mounier made a report in which he advocated that a Declaration of Rights should precede the Constitution, but only as a preamble to it. He observed that the work of the Constitution could not be considered wisely in the open session of the Assembly, but should be referred to a special committee which would meet three times a week and give careful consideration to all the articles of the Constitution before it was brought before the Assembly. On the contrary, Lafayette held that the Declaration of Rights should be decreed before the Constitution, and he submitted to the Assembly a sketch of such a declaration, which he hoped would be sent to the bureaux for consideration. This document is of peculiar interest because it was the first Declaration of Rights published in Europe and formed the basis of the Declaration passed by the Assembly at the end of August.

"The particular reason for bringing it forward at this moment," writes Thomas Paine (M. de la Fayette has since informed me), "was, that if the National Assembly should fall in the threatened destruction that then surrounded it, some traces of its principles might have the chance of surviving the wreck." 44

We have seen above that Lafayette had written the Declaration of Rights early in June and had shown it to Jefferson and was waiting for an opportunity to submit it to the Assembly. True to his American principles, "and in conformity to America at the era of the Revolution," Lafayette decided that the time had come to present the Declaration of Rights.

This Declaration of Rights is significant for two reasons. First, it was published and sent to Paris when everything was in a state of fermentation, and furnished the people with the political principles which justified the insurrection of the 13th of July and the election of the Commune upon the basis of the electorate of May; secondly, the Declaration marked the high tide of democratic principles enunciated by the popular leaders of the Assembly. Three sections of this document are of much interest as revealing the direction towards which the popular leaders were tending in the regeneration of France. 1. "Nature has

<sup>44</sup> Paine, "Rights of Man," p. 27. Edition of 1791.

made men free and equal. The necessary distinctions in the social order are founded only on the general interests." "Every man is born with inalienable and imprescriptible rights; such are the liberty of his opinions, the care of his honour and his life, the right of property, the entire disposition of his person, of his industry, of all his faculties, the communication of his thoughts by all means possible, the pursuit of well-being, the *resistance to oppression*. The exercise of natural rights is limited only by those rights which assure the enjoyment of them by other members of society."

2. "The principle of all sovereignty resides in the nation; no body, no individual can have authority which does not emanate expressly from it; all government has for its unique end the common good; this interest demands that the legislative, executive, and judicial powers shall be distinct, defined, and that their organisation assures the free representation of the citizens, the responsibility of agents, and the impartiality of judges."

3. "The laws ought to be clear, precise, uniform for all citizens, the subsidies freely consented to and proportionally shared; and as the introduction of abuses and the right of generations who succeed each other necessitate the revision of all human establishment, it ought to be possible for the nation to have, in a certain case, an extraordinary convocation of deputies, whose sole object will be to examine and correct the vices of the Constitution, if it is necessary." <sup>45</sup>

An outline of the Constitution was also presented to the Assembly at this time and involved a Declaration of Rights; Principles of the Monarchy, Rights of the nation; Rights of the King; Rights of the citizens; organisation of the Rights of the National Assembly; forms necessary for the enactment of law; organisation and functions of the Provincial and Municipal Assemblies; duties and limits of the judiciary power; functions and duties of the military power.

A constitution based upon these principles called for a high order of statesmanship and revealed the lengths which the leaders were ready to go in the regeneration of the kingdom. Had there been no popular uprising on July 14th, the radical and revolutionary programme would have been written into the Constitution. The Assembly was swayed by democratic ideas of liberty and equality and the dominant majority would not hesitate to sweep away everything which opposed their progress. Jefferson, who was in close touch with many of the leaders of the

<sup>45</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 84.

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Assembly, bears this witness to their aims and ideals. He says, "The National Assembly having shown through every stage of these transactions a coolness, wisdom, and resolution to set fire to the four corners of the kingdom and to perish with it themselves, rather than to relinquish an iota from their plan of a total change of government, are now in complete and undisputed possession of the sovereignty. The Executive and the Aristocracy are at their feet; the mass of the nation, the mass of the clergy, and the army are with them; they have prostrated the old government, and are now beginning to build one from the foundation." <sup>46</sup>

The Assembly had seized the sovereign power and were determined to use it to make a constitution based upon republican principles. But the perilous position of the Assembly, surrounded by troops, the rumours of the dismissal of Necker, and a coup d'état by the court served to awaken alarms and to keep the Assembly in a state of agitation. The suspense and tension were at last dissolved on July 12th by the announcement of the dismissal of Necker and the formation of a reactionary ministry with the Duc de Lavauguyon, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bréteuil, Department of Paris, and Foulon, Minister of War. When the news was carried to Paris, the electors formed at once a provisional government and a bourgeois militia, and the people rose in insurrection.

The news which came from Paris to the Assembly became more and more alarming, and the Assembly decided to send another deputation to the king demanding the removal of the troops. The king returned the same answer as heretofore. The Assembly then determined upon a more decisive step and passed this decree: "The National Assembly, interpreting the sentiments of the nation, declares that Monsieur Necker as well as the other ministers, who have just been dismissed, carry with them its esteem and its regrets; declares, that frightened by the sad consequences to which the reply of the King will lead, it will not cease to insist on the departure of the troops which have been strangely mustered near Paris and Versailles, and for the establishment of a bourgeois guard.

"Declares again, that there cannot exist an intermediary between the King and the National Assembly; that the ministers, the agents of civil power and military authority, are responsible for all enterprises contrary to the rights of the Assembly; that the actual ministers, the counsellors of His Majesty, of whatever

<sup>46</sup> Jefferson, Vol. III, p. 70.



rank and whatever quality which they may be, or whatever functions which they may have, are personally responsible for the present evils, or for any others which might occur; that since the public debt has been put under the safe-guard of the honour and loyalty of Frenchmen, and the nation will not refuse to pay interest, no power has the right to pronounce the infamous word of bankruptcy; no power has the right to discredit the public faith, no matter what may be its form or denomination. Finally, the Assembly declares, that it persists in its preceding decrees, and notably those of the 19th, 20th, and 23rd of June last; and the present deliberation will be remitted to the King by the President of the National Assembly and published in printing. The Assembly, moreover, declares that the President will write to M. Necker and to the other ministers, who have been dismissed, to inform them of the decree concerning them." <sup>47</sup>

• This decree was aimed at the Queen and the royal princes to hold them responsible for future events.

The Assembly also determined upon a permanent sitting; one party to pass the night in the hall and to be relieved in the morning by another party. In order to relieve the president, the Archbishop of Vienne, who was an old man, from the strain of this continuous session, Lafayette was elected vice-president. The resolutions and decrees were sent to Paris on July 13th, and to show the unanimity of the Assembly at this period, they were signed by the deputies, representing diversity of opinions; Lafayette, vice-president; Mounier, Sieyès, Chapelier, Gregoire, and Clermont-Tonnerre. Thus the Assembly was at one in its opposition to the new ministry and to the threat of dissolution.

On the 14th, Paris rose and the Bastille was taken, and the government of Paris sent two deputies to Versailles to inform the Assembly of the condition of affairs and to unite their forces. The time was still critical and neither Paris nor the Assembly yet knew what action the court would take and whether the troops would be ordered to advance upon Paris.

"The Court had resolved to act that very night," writes Ferrières. "The regiments of the royal German and royal foreigners had received orders to take up arms. The hussars had been ordered on the premises of the Chateau; the gardes-du-corps occupied the courtyards. To these menacing preparations the court joined an air of fête which, under the circumstances, added insult to injury. The Comte d'Artois, the Polignacs, Mesdames d'Artois went onto the terrace of the Orangerie. The bands of

<sup>47</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 117.

the two regiments were ordered to play. The soldiers, on whom wine had not been spared, formed dances; an insolent and brutal joy broke out on all sides; a company of women, of courtiers, men sold to despotism, regarded this strange spectacle with satisfaction, and animated it by their applause. Such was the frivolity, or rather the immorality of these beings, who, assured as they believed of success, indulged themselves in an insulting triumph." <sup>48</sup>

But these courtiers of despotism were destined soon to receive a severe shock when the news arrived that the troops ordered to advance upon Paris had said, "We will march on the enemy, but not on the people of Paris." The next morning, when the Assembly proposed to send another address to the king, Mirabeau rose up suddenly and brushing aside all the gentle and insignificant phrases, cried out, "Monsieur President, tell the King that the hordes of foreigners with whom we are surrounded received yesterday a visit from princes and princesses, favoured and favourites, and received their caresses, their exhortations, and their presents. Tell him, that all night these foreign satellites, gorged with wine and gold, have predicted in their impious songs the subjection of France; and that their brutal vows invoked the destruction of the National Assembly. Tell him, that even in his palace, the courtiers have danced to the sound of this barbarous music, and that such was the scene before St. Bartholomew! Tell him, that the Henry whose memory the universe blesses, whom he affected to take as a model from his ancestors, admitted provisions into a revolted Paris, which he was besieging in person; and tell him that his own ferocious counsellors order back the grain which trade brings to a famished and faithful Paris." <sup>49</sup>

On their way to the king, the deputation met the Duc de Liancourt who announced that the king was coming to the Assembly. This sudden change was due to the Duc de Liancourt who, by his privileged position, had gone to the king at midnight, and, forcing his way into his apartment, had given him a detailed account of the insurrection of Paris.

The king had replied, "It is a revolt." "No, your Majesty," answered the duke, "it is a revolution."

And thus the second crisis was terminated, not by the power of the Assembly, but by calling into action the armed forces of the people and the mob of Paris. The next day, the king came to the

<sup>48</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," p. 127.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Assembly accompanied only by his brothers, to make his peace and to ask them to help him in restoring order in the capital. The announcement that the king was coming to the Assembly created a feeling of exaltation among the deputies, relieved from the terrible strain of the last few days, and they were ready to receive the king with unbounded acclamations; but Mirabeau counselled moderation in the reception of the king. "Let us wait," he said, "until his Majesty himself informs us of his good intentions which are felt on his part. The blood of our brethren flows at Paris. Let a mournful respect be the first reception to the monarch of an unhappy people; the silence of the people is the lesson of Kings."<sup>50</sup> And thus in profound silence, the king was received by the Assembly and it was not until he announced his purpose to dismiss the troops, that the Assembly broke out into transports of joy, crying, "Vive le Roi!" They then rose up in a body and formed a body-guard around him and accompanied him to the palace.

The people of Versailles shared in the enthusiasm of the deputies and word was immediately sent to Paris. But the question now arose of the wisdom of the king going to Paris to make his peace with the city. The government of Paris had elected Bailly mayor, and Lafayette commander of the bourgeois guard, and the revolutionary leaders desired the king to sanction these offices and to give the new government a standing before the nation. "The troops departed without the King; all those who were in imminent danger left at the same time. The King will go to Paris to-morrow to the Hôtel de Ville, said the queen; 'It is not he who has chosen this course. The debates were long; the king terminated them by rising and saying, 'In a word, gentlemen, it must be decided; ought I to depart or to remain? I am ready to do one or the other.' The majority had been for the King to remain.'"<sup>51</sup>

"On the 16th of July, there had been a committee in the room of the King where they had discussed a most important question," said Madam Campan, "Ought His Majesty to leave Versailles, and depart with the troops whom he had just ordered to withdraw, or should he return to Paris and calm the minds of the people? The Queen wished to leave. On the evening of the 16th, she made me remove all her strings of diamonds from her jewel casket and put them into one small box which she could take in her own carriage. She burned with me a great quantity of

<sup>50</sup> Mignet, "French Revolution," Vol. I, p. 102.

<sup>51</sup> Dulaure, "Esquisses de la Révolution Française," p. 196.

papers; for from this moment Versailles was menaced with an excursion of armed men from Paris." <sup>52</sup>

The king went to Paris accompanied with a body-guard of the militia of Versailles, his gentlemen of his household, and one hundred deputies. He was met at the gates of the city by Lafayette and the national guard, who lined the streets from the gates to the Hôtel de Ville. Bailly also met him and delivered to him the keys of the city, saying, "Sire, I bring to your Majesty the keys of your good city of Paris; they are the same which were presented to Henry IV. He had reconquered his people; this time the people have reconquered their King." On this statement the king turned to one of his friends and said, "I suppose I must overlook that."

The king's carriage moved along the Rue Saint-Honoré, lined with people who received him in silence or with cries of "Vive la nation!" to the Hôtel de Ville, where he met the provisional government. He was escorted into the hall where, seated on the throne, he received the addresses made to him by Mayor Bailly and other members of the council. The king accepted the tri-colored cockade and, putting it in the lapel of his coat, he appeared at a window, whereupon the people broke out into rounds of applause when they saw that he wore the colours of the Revolution. This sealed the reconciliation of the people with their king. Finally, he confirmed the appointment of Bailly as mayor of Paris and Lafayette as commander of the national guard. The king returned through the streets amid the acclamations of the people and he departed to Versailles, reconciled to the Revolution and his good city of Paris.

The triumph of the Revolution up to this point was due to two factors; first, to the firmness and unanimity of the deputies of the Assembly in opposition to the schemes of the court; and secondly, to the insurrection of the people of Paris, leading to the fall of the Bastille and the organisation of a municipal government based upon the suffrages of the people. All that was achieved from this time onward takes its impulse from this day, July the 14th. It was the action of the people of Paris, the enlightened middle class united with the mob of the city, which secured the safety of the Assembly and gave permanence to its future work. The authority to make the Constitution now rested, not with the king, but with the Assembly. But more ominous for the future was the fact that the National Assembly had been forced to appeal directly to the people, in order to

<sup>52</sup> Dulaure, "Esquisses de la Révolution Française," p. 197.

maintain its position. We shall see later how this fact reacted upon the Assembly and how the rising of the people on July 14th was made the precedent by the demagogues to appeal to the people at critical periods during the Revolution. From now on, the spirit of democracy gains in momentum as the Assembly proceeds in its work, and the doctrine of equality and the rights of man become the watchword of further revolutionary outbreaks. A new spirit had come over the minds of the people, a spirit which was the prophecy of the beginning of a new age.

A foreigner visiting Paris during the last days of July, gives his impression of this spirit. He says: "I know not how to give the impressions which seized me when, for the first time, I saw the French cockade on the hats and bonnets of those whom we encountered, bourgeois and peasants, children and old men, priests and mendicants, and I could read on their joyful faces a sort of pride, in the presence of men belonging to other countries. I would like to have clasped in my arms the first ones who appeared before me. They were no longer Frenchmen. My companions and I had ceased for an instant to be Brandenburgers, the inhabitants of Brunswick; the differences, the interests of nations had disappeared: 'I am a man, each of us said, and nothing that concerns humanity is foreign to me.'"<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de la Révolution," Vol. II, p. 450.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEMOCRACY: THE DECLARATION OF RIGHTS AND THE CONSTITUTION

THE news of the insurrection of Paris and the taking of the Bastille travelled fast through every part of France, and produced an intoxication for liberty which overthrew the royal authority in all the cities and towns. The people rose in insurrection against the municipal governments and elected committees to conduct the administration; and the thousands of communes organised on an elective basis witnessed to the new spirit and the new joy of the people in their recovered liberty. Risings took place at Troyes on the 18th of July, at Strasbourg on the 19th, at Cherbourg on the 21st, at Rouen on the 24th, and at Maubeuge on the 27th. About the same time, at Péronne, the capital of Picardy, the inhabitants rose in insurrection and "burned the toll-gates and threw the custom-house officers into the water and carried off the receipts of the Government and set the prisoners free." And the mayor wrote on July 28th, "After receiving the news from Paris on the night of the 27th, Hainault, Flanders, and all Picardy have taken arms; the tocsin is ringing in all towns and villages."<sup>1</sup> Soon there were three hundred thousand armed men in these provinces. This arming of the people had been due to what was called at the time "the great fear." Emissaries had been sent down from Paris by some of the revolutionary leaders to alarm the people and induce them to arm. They had gone into the country districts and spread rumours that brigands were coming to burn the crops and to starve the people. They described them as armed bands numbering from five hundred to a thousand men. These rumours spread with an inconceivable rapidity all over France and fear magnified their numbers and depredations. Everywhere the cry went forth, "the brigands are coming," a sudden terror seized the people and in the towns the communes organised bourgeois guards to protect life and property until France presented the appearance of a camp with three millions of men under arms.

<sup>1</sup> Kropotkin, "The Great Revolution," p. 116.

"At the same time, and by the example of Paris," writes Rabaut, "all the citizens of the empire are taking arms for their security; all are forming themselves into companies, into battalions and into regiments. At this time a rumour is spread abroad in all the kingdom that the fugitives propose to attack France; it is said that thousands of brigands will come presently; that they are there; that there is no time to lose in protecting themselves; that the couriers, whom no one has seen, have brought the news. The idlest are goaded by sudden fright, and, in eight days, three millions of men are enrolled and the cockade of three colours decorates every head. The ancient municipalities, suspected almost everywhere, are replaced by committees which direct the public affairs; and I do not know what sort of order was everywhere established in the midst of fears, of hope, of the intoxication of liberty, of the destruction of power, and of all the people who bestir themselves in the hope of bettering their condition."<sup>2</sup>

This fermentation of the people in the towns was aggravated by the rising of the country districts and the arming of the peasantry. The hatred of the peasantry against feudalism was intense, and these fires of hatred which had been slumbering for many months were fanned into a flame by the conflict between the Commons and the noblesse. The dismissal of Necker was the spark which kindled the conflagration. On all sides the peasants rose in revolt, and in their villages armed themselves and went forth to attack the chateaux of the seigneurs. In their cahiers, they had demanded the destruction of the feudal system. In one of the pamphlets of the time, entitled "*Les Incendiaires du Dauphiné ou les Ennemis des Grands*," we read, "The great, the rich, the seigneurs of the provinces have for such a long time so cruelly crushed the people, that there exists an ancient hatred almost ineffaceable. The subsistence of these people has been taken to melt into silver, to carry in ground-rent to their tyrannical seigneurs; sometimes there was statute labour; sometimes unjust trials, sometimes violence. Vengeance accumulates during a century in their ulcerated hearts, and as soon as it can act, becomes a torrent which no longer knows restraint."<sup>3</sup>

When the contagion of liberty seized the peasantry, they took matters into their own hands and determined to destroy the title-deeds and parchments of their servitude. They went in bands to the chateaux and demanded the title-deeds and burned them in

<sup>2</sup> Rabaut, "*Précis Historique de la Révolution Française*," p. 186. 1791.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Blanc, "*Révolution Française*," Vol. II, p. 453. Quoted.

the court-yards. If these were refused, they set fire to the chateaux and drove the owners away. In some instances they murdered the owners; but these were exceptional cases where the seigneurs had the reputation of oppressing their tenants or resorting to force to protect their property. These excesses were mostly confined to Dauphiné, Franche-Comté, and Brittany. Burning chateaux marked the advance of the peasant bands and it was probably these which gave rise to the rumours, "the brigands are coming." It was reckoned that thirty chateaux were plundered or burned in Dauphiné, nearly forty in Franche-Comté, sixty-two in the Maconnais and Beaujolais, but nine only in the Auvergne and five chateaux in the Viennois. These were not all chateaux of the nobility; for some belonged to the monopolists who had raised the price of bread and helped to create the famine.

"In Franche-Comté, bands of peasants invested the abbeys of Clairefontaine, of Lure, of Bithaine, devastated the chateau of Molans, destroyed from top to bottom that of Vauxvilliers, which belonged to the duchess of Clermont-Tonnerre. At the approach of the assailants, this lady had to flee; she sought refuge in a granary where she remained hidden behind the fagots, until the arrival of a company of Chasseurs which the Princess of Broglie sent to her and which placed her in safety. It was only the anger of the rural population attempting to display itself against certain persons; and in general it vented itself only against those insolent stones which conserved the memory of servitude and against the titles which, by heredity, perpetuated the feudal tyranny."<sup>4</sup>

On July 19th, M. de Mesmay, a member of the protesting nobles, gave a fête on his estate at Vesoul to which he invited the peasants of the neighborhood. When the gaiety was at its height, he retired that he might not diminish the joy of the fête. Soon after a mine exploded under the feet of the people, and soldiers said "they had seen men floating in their blood, their corpses scattered over the place." Immediately the peasants dispersed, breathing maledictions against the chateau. The cry of treason, spreading from village to village, mingled with the sound of the tocsin. This affair created such a commotion that the authorities sent an account of it to the National Assembly. The procès-verbal was signed by the lieutenant-general. It said, "Our Seigneurs, the city of Vesoul does not wish to afflict the National Assembly with an account of all the disorders, carried to excess in its bailiwick; the chateaux burned, demolished, and

<sup>4</sup> Louis Blanc, "Révolution Française," Vol. II, p. 455.



at least, pillaged; all the archives broken open, the registers and land records seized, the depots violated, the most horrible menaces and extreme violences committed. The city of Vesoul only implores the National Assembly to pass a decree which will restore public tranquillity among the men of the country districts," and it added, "As there is formed at the same time bands of vagabonds, it would still be essential for the National Assembly, by the same decree, to authorise the employment of force to restrain them."<sup>5</sup>

The National Assembly listened to the reading with horror and appointed a deputation to lay the matter before the king which was done the next day, July 27th. His Majesty replied that he shared the general indignation and had given orders to prosecute the criminals. The Assembly was in a peculiar position; for if it authorised the king to employ force to put down these disturbances, they would clothe him with power of which the insurrection of July had deprived him; and many of the deputies, in the present state of the country with constant rumours of plots among the nobles, were fearful of a counter-revolution. While some of the bourgeoisie in Lyons had sided with the nobility against the people, the National Assembly had no desire to put itself in opposition to the people upon whose support they still leaned to hold the nobles in check. It was these facts which explain the weakness of the Assembly at this time, faced by the people on one side, and confronted by the court and the nobles on the other.

On July 27th, the Assembly turned its attention to the question of the Constitution. The president, the Archbishop of Bordeaux, opened the meeting by raising the question whether a Declaration of Rights should precede the Constitution. He said: "This noble idea, conceived in another hemisphere, ought by preference to be considered by us first. We have contributed to the events which have given to North America its liberty; it shows us on what principles we ought to endeavour to conserve our own. . . . The members of your committee have all been occupied with this important Declaration of Rights. They have differed very little in the fundamental principles; but there is a greater difference in the expression and in the form. Two schemes have appeared to unite the different characters of the others. By the printed form, you have already become acquainted with that of Abbé Sieyès; you will now hear that of M. Mounier's. The first emphasises, so to speak, the nature of man in his first elements; . . .

<sup>5</sup>"*Histoire Parlementaire*," Vol. II, p. 160.

that of M. Mounier is founded also on the same observations, of the nature of man; . . . You will find in the project of M. Mounier the ideas which have already been presented to you by M. de la Fayette, and which have received your eulogies; and M. Mounier has been equally at pains to consult the divers projects remitted by many distinguished members of this Assembly."<sup>6</sup>

The president then called attention to the different characteristics of these projects; one marked by its profundity, the other by its simplicity. He suggested that they might find it better to give "birth to a new form in which all could agree and which would represent the work of all." Then he closed his address by saying, "We have joined to these projects of the Declaration of Rights of Man and of Citizen, the plan of the first chapter of the Constitution, on the principle of the French Government. Here we have been guided and enlightened by an ancient tradition, and by the unanimous opinion of the cahiers. We shall submit this plan to your examination; we shall perfect it by the aid of your intelligence."<sup>7</sup>

Clermont-Tonnerre then delivered a résumé of the principles of the cahiers, giving eleven articles in which there was universal agreement. These were: 1. The French Government is a monarchical government; 2. The person of the king is inviolable and sacred; 3. His crown is hereditary from male to male; 4. The king is the depositary of executive power; 5. The agents of authority are responsible; 6. The royal sanction is necessary for the promulgation of the laws; 7. The nation makes the law with the sanction of the king; 8. The national consent is necessary for a loan and a tax; 9. The tax can be granted only from one States-General to another; 10. Property will be sacred; 11. Individual liberty will be sacred. He then presented eighteen articles in which there was diversity among the cahiers; these related to the questions of dissolution of the States-General by the king; the two chambers, the representation of the first two orders; whether those employed by the court could be deputies of the States-General.

At the close of this report, Mounier presented the first articles which had been adopted by the committee; Chapter I entitled Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizen. This included twenty-three articles, and the second chapter, Principles of the French Government, included thirty-five articles. The session

<sup>6</sup> "Histoire Parlementaire," Vol. ff, pp. 163-170.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

was closed with the reading of these articles. The next day the Marquis de Volney moved that a committee of thirty be formed to take the Constitution into consideration. The election of this committee occupied the attention of the Assembly for the next three days. On the 1st of August the session was opened with the question: "Whether they would or would not put a Declaration of Rights at the beginning of the Constitution?" Fifty-six orators intimated their desire to speak on this question which was to formulate the principles of the Revolution.

Durand de Maillane opened the discussion with stating: "I am charged by my bailiwick to proclaim a declaration of rights which will form the base of the Constitution." The Comte de Castellane held that the Declaration of Rights should precede the Constitution and alluded to those who thought such a declaration dangerous in view of the excesses of the multitude at this time. He thought that the true way "to arrest license" was "to lay the foundations of liberty; that the more the people knew their rights, the more they would love the law which protected them."<sup>8</sup>

The Duc de Levis and the Bishop of Auxerre and some others opposed putting the Declaration of Rights in a separate document. The bishop said: "The example of North America is not conclusive, since that country only consists of proprietors, cultivators, and like citizens; thus it is necessary to commence first by establishing the laws which bring men together before saying to them, as in the United States, you are equal."<sup>9</sup>

The Bishop of Langres concurred in this view, but Barnave spoke in opposition to it: "The necessity of a Declaration of Rights has been demonstrated with much evidence. . . . This Declaration has two useful purposes: first, to determine the spirit of legislation in order that it may not be changed in the future; second, to guide the mind in completing this legislation, which cannot foresee every case. . . . They have said that it was useless because it is written in all our hearts; dangerous, because the people will abuse their rights as soon as they know them. But experience and history victoriously replies to and refutes both these observations. I believe that it is indispensable to put at the head of the Constitution a Declaration of the Rights which men ought to enjoy. It must be simple, so as to reach every mind, and to become the national catechism."<sup>10</sup>

Malouet, the representative of the party which was contending

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

for maintaining the powers of the king, made the best statement in opposition to the Declaration of Rights. He said: "The laws are only the result and the expression of natural, civil, and political rights and duties. I am far, then, from regarding as useless the work presented by the committee. The most luminous ideas, the most important truths cannot be combined in fewer words or more profound reasoning. But shall we convert into a legislative act this metaphysical statement, or shall we present the principles with their modifications, in the Constitution which we are about to make? I know that the Americans have not taken this precaution; they have taken man from the heart of nature, and presented him to the universe in his primitive sovereignty. But American society newly formed, is composed, as a whole, of proprietors already accustomed to equality, foreign to luxury as even to indigence, scarcely knowing the yoke of taxes, of prejudices which dominate us, not having found on the land which they cultivate any trace of feudalism. Without doubt, such men were prepared to receive liberty in all its energy; for their tastes, their customs, their position call them to democracy.

"But we, gentlemen, we have for fellow-citizens an immense multitude of men without property, who, before all things, look for their maintenance in constant work, in precise police regulations, in continued protection, and who are sometimes irritated, not without just motives, by the spectacle of luxury and opulence. It will be thought from this, without doubt, that I am proving that this class of citizens has no legal right to liberty. Such a thought is far from me. Liberty ought to be as the star of day which lightens all the world. But I believe that it is necessary, in a great empire for men placed by fate in a dependent condition, to see the just limits, rather than the extension of liberty.

"Observe, gentlemen, that there are no natural rights which do not find themselves modified by positive rights. And if you present the principle and the exception, behold the law; if you indicate no restriction, why offer to men the rights in all their plenitude which they ought only to use with just limitations? Why, then, commence by transporting him on to a high mountain, and showing him his empire without limits, when he must descend from it to find limits in each step?"<sup>11</sup>

The discussion of this question was then postponed until Monday, August 3d, when the Comte d'Antraigues pointed out that "it is indispensable to make a Declaration of Rights to arrest the ravages of despotism. If our ancestors had left us this

<sup>11</sup> Buchez, "Histoire Parlementaire," Vol. II, pp. 201-3.

great work, we would not be occupied in procuring it for our descendants. The Declaration is indispensable so that if heaven, in its anger, punished us a second time with the plague of despotism, they could at least show the tyrant the injustice of his pretensions, his duties and the rights of the people.”<sup>12</sup>

In the evening the session was interrupted by a report by Salomon on the agitated state of the country and the spirit of anarchy which reigned in the country districts. He proposed that the Assembly decree “that no reason can justify the suspensions on payments of the tax and of all other claims—and that it sees with grief the troubles which these refusals occasion and that they are essentially contrary to the principles of public right which the Assembly will not cease to maintain.”<sup>13</sup>

Some of the deputies deprecated considering the decree at this time and the matter was put off until another day. The next day, August 4th, the question of a Declaration of Duties was raised by Gregoire and Camus, but the Assembly refused to consider it. It was evident, however, to some of the leaders that something more effective than a Declaration of Rights must be passed if the people were to be quieted; an example of sacrifice of rights must be given to show them the sincerity of the Declaration. The more enlightened nobles who knew the peasantry and their desire for the abolition of feudalism took the lead. At a meeting of the Breton Club, Chapelier with the Duc d’Aiguillon and others had arranged that, at the evening session, the Duc d’Aiguillon should make this proposal. At eight o’clock in the evening of the memorable August 4th, the deputies began to gather and it was noticed that they came together with an air of preoccupation and that some of the nobles spoke to each other in low voices. The session was opened by Target proposing a revision of the decree presented by Salomon the day before. This revision was that the Assembly “continue its labours on the Constitution; that the ancient laws be executed and the taxes collected in accordance with the decree of the National Assembly of June 17th; and, finally, that the laws established for the security of person and of properties must be universally respected.”<sup>14</sup>

This proposition at once provoked an animated discussion, and the Comte de Noailles claimed the attention of the Assembly, saying, “The object of the proclamation which you have just heard is to arrest the ferment in the provinces, to assure public

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 205.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>14</sup> Delaure, “Esquisses de la Révolution Française,” Vol. I, p. 247.

liberty, and to confirm proprietors in their true rights. But how can there be any hope of success without knowing the cause of the insurrection which manifests itself in the kingdom? And how can we remedy it, without applying the remedy to the evils which agitate the country?" Then he proposed four propositions to quiet the people and to restore tranquillity to the country. First, let it be said, before the projected Declaration of the committee, that the representatives of the nation have decided the tax should be paid by every individual in the kingdom in proportion to his income.

Second, that in the future, all public expenses will be equally supported by all; third, that all feudal rights will be redeemable by the communities, in money, or exchanged at the price of a just estimate; that is to say, according to the income of each common year, taken on ten years of income; fourth, that the seigneurial statute labour, the mainmort and other personal servilities, will be reformed without redemption."<sup>15</sup>

These propositions came as a surprise to the members of the Breton Club, who saw the initiative in the plan to abolish feudalism taken from them by a nobleman who had few interests at stake and had nothing to lose by his proposals. Nevertheless the Duc d'Aiguillon, one of the richest nobles of France, who had large estates in the Midi, at once rose and supported the propositions of De Noailles. In the course of his remarks, he said, "In this age of light, where philosophy has recovered its empire, at this fortunate epoch where united for public happiness, and disengaged from all personal interest, we work for the regeneration of the State, it seems to me, that it is necessary, before establishing this Constitution which the nation awaits with so much anticipation, it is necessary, I say, to prove to every citizen that our intention, our wish is to advance beyond his desire, and to establish as promptly as possible this equality of rights which ought to exist between every man, and which can alone assure his liberty. I do not doubt that the proprietors of the fiefs, the seigneurs of the land, far from rejecting this truth, are disposed to make, with justice, a sacrifice of their rights."

The Duc d'Aiguillon then proposed that the National Assembly "decree that the bodies, cities, communities, and individuals who have enjoyed until the present time particular privileges, personal exemptions, will support in the future all subsidies, all public charges, without any distinctions, either in the rate of the assessments, or in the form of their collection. The National

<sup>15</sup> Delaure, "Esquisses de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 248.

Assembly, considering further that the feudal seigneurial rights are also a kind of burdensome tribute which injures agriculture and desolates the country, cannot conceal from itself that these rights are a true property, and that all property is inviolable; and decree that these rights will be in the future reimbursable at the will of the debtors, at 30 years' purchase, or at any other purchase which in each province will be judged more equitable by the National Assembly according to the rates which will be presented." <sup>16</sup>

At the close of the address of the Duc d'Aiguillon, a cultivator of Basse Bretagne, clothed in the habit of a peasant, at once mounted the tribune and pleaded the cause of the peasants: "You would have prevented the burning of the chateaux, if you had been more prompt in declaring that the dreadful arms which they contain, and which have tormented the people for centuries, are going to be destroyed by the forced redemption which you are about to decree. The people, impatient of obtaining justice and weary of oppression, were eager to destroy these title-deeds, monuments of the barbarity of our fathers. Be just, gentlemen; the title-deeds which have been brought here not alone outrage decency, but even humanity; these title-deeds which have been brought to us humiliate the human race, in exacting that men be put as horses to a cart, as beasts of burden; these title-deeds which have been brought to us oblige men to pass the nights in beating the ponds to prevent the frogs troubling the sleep of their voluptuous seigneurs.

"Who of us, gentlemen, in this age of light, would not make an expiatory funeral pile of these infamous parchments, and carry a torch to make a sacrifice on the altar of the public good? You will not restore calm in agitated France until you will have promised the people that you will convert all the feudal rights whatsoever by payment of money, redeemable at will; that the laws which you are about to promulgate, will destroy even the smallest trace of the rights of servitude of which they justly complain. Tell them that you recognise the injustice of these rights acquired in times of ignorance and darkness. For the sake of peace, hasten to give these promises to France. A general cry has made itself heard; you have not a moment to lose; a day of delay occasions fresh embarrassments; the downfall of empires is announced with less disturbance. Do you wish to give laws only to a devastated France?" <sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Buchez, "Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 225. Delaure, Vol. I, p. 248.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 229.

This address was received by the Assembly with much enthusiasm and applause and it was followed by speeches by other deputies who spoke on the evils of the feudal system. The Duc du Chatelet regretted that the Comte de Noailles had proposed before him the destruction of feudal rights and "he assured the Assembly that he had written to his steward to stop payment on some of his rights, and to admit his vassals to the redemption of others." Then one after another of the deputies, carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment, suggested other reforms. Some advocated the abolition of seigneurial justice and others the venality of the charges of the magistrates; two curés proposed the execution of canonical laws against plurality of benefices and the Archbishop of Nîmes urged that they exempt artisans and workers from all charges as they had no property. When any interrupted the session to call attention to the precipitation and lightness with which they voted the fortunes of individuals away they were received with murmurs of disapproval. The Assembly seemed to be carried away with a spirit of intoxication and greeted each new sacrifice with acclamations. The Vicomte de Montmorency proposed that the Assembly decree immediately all the motions which had been made. Then the president, Chapelier, observed that as "none of the clergy have had the faculty of making themselves heard, I would reproach myself if I put an end to this interesting discussion before those among them who would like to speak have made known their sentiments."<sup>18</sup>

To this appeal, the Bishop of Nancy responded: "Accustomed to see intimately the misery and grief of the people, the members of the clergy have as ardent a desire as others to see it cease. The redemption of feudal rights was reserved to the nation which wishes to establish liberty. The honourable members who have already spoken have demanded redemption only for proprietors; I come to express in the name of the clergy a wish which honours at the same time, justice, religion, and humanity. I demand that, if the redemption is agreed to, it will not be turned to the profit of the ecclesiastical seigneur, but that it will be made useful by being placed at the disposal of the same benefices, in order that their administrators can expend abundant alms on the indigent."<sup>19</sup>

Then the Bishop of Chartres proposed to give up the right of the chase which was a plague upon the country districts and this example created a new wave of enthusiasm to surrender more

<sup>18</sup> Delaure, Vol. I, p. 156.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 256.



rights. In rapid succession, the Assembly proposed the adoption of the principle of gratuitous justice and many curés surrendered their fees; the Duc de Chatelet proposed that a tax in money be substituted for the tithes, "save that it is permitted to redeem them, as the rights of the seigneurs." The Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt demanded the enfranchisement of all serfs and the alleviation of the condition of the slaves in the colonies.

Under the impulse of these new sacrifices, the Assembly seemed to some of the deputies to be carried away by its enthusiasm and in danger of sacrificing many vital interests. "Lally-Tollendal, a passive witness of these extravagances, passed a letter to Chapelier, the president, on which was written, "Nobody is any more master of himself, raise the séance."<sup>20</sup> But suddenly a crowd of voices cried out, "that individuals having abandoned their rights and privileges, it is just that the provinces and the cities equally abandon the privileges and rights which fall on the greatest part of the kingdom and present a shocking disproportion in the division of the tax."

This suggestion created a tumult, and in the midst of the storm, the Marquis de Blagon obtained the floor and proposed the renunciation of the privileges of the province of Dauphiné. This was the signal for all the provinces to make the same renunciation. Then came the turn of the cities, and they also renounced their privileges; and finally it was proposed to destroy the venality of the charges of the magistrates and to abrogate the laws relating to corporations and religious liberty for non-Catholics.

The Archbishop of Paris then proposed a *Te Deum* on the deeds of grace for the establishment of public liberty and the Duc de Liancourt proposed that the Assembly strike a medal in commemoration of this nocturnal session of which the memory would be retained by posterity. Not to be outdone by the others, the Marquis de Gouy proposed the institution of a national fête to celebrate the night of the 4th of August and another deputy proposed that a deputation be sent to the king to communicate to him the resolutions of this session. This at once brought Lally-Tollendal to his feet and he expressed the feelings of all when he said: "I know not if my heart deceives me, but you have intoxicated me with joy. . . . In the midst of this burst of patriotism, in the midst of these transports which confound all our senti-

<sup>20</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 182.

ments, all our views, all our souls, should we not remember the King? A King who has convoked us, when these national assemblies were suspended for nearly two centuries; a King who has invited us, the first to this fortunate gathering which we have just consummated; a King who has given to us of his own accord all the rights which his justice has recognised he ought not to conserve. On this beautiful day in which each receives his reward, in which each has his happiness. It is in the midst of the States-General that Louis XII has been proclaimed, 'Father of the People'; I propose that in the midst of this national Assembly, the most august, the most useful that ever was held, Louis XVI be proclaimed the 'Restorer of French Liberty.' " <sup>21</sup>

This proclamation was immediately voted by acclamation, and the hall of the Assembly was filled with cries of "Vive le Roi! Vive Louis XVI, Restaurateur de la liberté française!" These cries lasted more than a quarter of an hour. It was said that the session lasted until two o'clock in the morning. On the next day many who had been carried away by the excitement and the intoxication of the evening rather regretted that the Assembly had gone so far in abolishing so many rights and privileges. The following days were occupied in drawing up several of the decrees that the Assembly had passed. Many motions had been made with certain restrictions, and especially those relating to the redemption of rights. Criticism now took the place of enthusiasm and the clergy and the noblesse mutually reproached each other for forcing their order to make too many sacrifices. It was said that the Assembly had been "too precipitate in demolishing the edifice before having formed a plan of reconstruction"; and others said, that "the night of the fourth of August was the night of sacrifices, the night of dupes, the Saint Bartholomew of properties." <sup>22</sup>

Bailly's opinion perhaps best summed up the real situation. "It is not only that the resolutions of this night have had many ill consequences and have prepared many evils. All the propositions had been hurriedly gathered together; all have not been decreed; many have been enacted too quickly. . . . This night has cost me, in my administration, much pain and much embarrassment. However, all these decisions have been useful and even necessary. It was the moment to assist the people of the country districts, nearly always or too long forgotten. It was necessary to establish the Revolution, to ordain the new order of

<sup>21</sup> "L'Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 241.

<sup>22</sup> Delaure, "Esquisses de la Rév. Franc.," Vol. I, pp. 264-5.

things; and for that, there was only one sure means; that was to attach the people to it." <sup>23</sup>

Undoubtedly, the decrees of the 4th of August assured the Revolution and were necessary to quiet the people; but it was a sacrifice that was not wholly the result of generosity. The first scheme of the abolition of feudal rights had been carefully prepared at the Breton Club and the Duc d'Aiguillon, as representative of the nobles, recognised that the abolition of feudal rights was necessary to protect their remaining property against the depredations of the peasants. Besides he was careful to add that these rights must be redeemed, and by this policy, the value of the rights which the peasants had destroyed was conserved. Moreover, the nobles by adopting this policy and taking the lead in the Assembly in abolishing feudalism, found a sure means of recovering their popularity with the people.

"By this initiative," writes Jaurés, "the nobles had everything to gain and nothing to lose. At first they could restore at one blow their popularity, which assured them a renewal of influence and power in the country districts. In the presence of these plain, timid bourgeois of the cities, who greatly trembled for the property which they were tempted to defend, even under the odious form of feudalism, behold the bold seigneurs who appeared to offer a sacrifice of their most detested privileges. And what did they lose? Nothing. For these privileges which they abandoned were abolished in fact by the universal uprising of the peasants; how were they going to recover these burned title-deeds? How maintain a background of terror and respect around their chateaux? They were dispersed forever in the flame of the torches. But there was a better way, and the proposition of de Noailles and d'Aiguillon was the only way, for the nobles, to recover by redemption the equivalent of their abandoned privileges." <sup>24</sup>

But that the Assembly went much farther in the abolition of rights than the original authors contemplated, was due to the fact that the state of public opinion, the discussion of the Rights of Man, the agitation of the country, and the terror which the insurrection of the peasants had caused, all contributed to sweep the Assembly off its feet; and the enthusiasm with which the first proposals were greeted created a rivalry of sacrifices which carried along even the most calculating of the deputies. Toulangeon, who was a deputy of the Assembly, tells us: "Many causes

<sup>23</sup> Bailly, "Mémoires," Vol. II, pp. 217-8.

<sup>24</sup> Jaurés, "Histoire Socialiste," Vol. I, p. 323.

concurred to facilitate its execution; the ripeness of affairs, which politically revealed what had become necessary, the lack of unity of interested parties, and also the momentary condition of all France; terror hovered, sword and torch in hand; each one who gave his vote in the Assembly, when voting, thought of his family and his patrimony. There happened what always happens in great unorganised movements; they drew along with them even those who went much farther than they had wished to go, and all retreat, even personal, was closed to them; if they attempted to check the crowd which they commanded and who followed them, they would be overturned and crushed by its mass. Even their adversaries, who had only hope of vengeance or of reprisals, were the first to precipitate this revolutionary mass, in the hope of carrying the leaders along in its downfall."<sup>25</sup>

While the noblesse had gained by the decrees of the 4th of August, the clergy had lost. The Assembly had voted the abolition of tithes with the right of redemption; but in the redaction of the decrees, the tithes had been abolished without redemption. This was only done after a very strenuous debate when the whole position of church property was brought under review in the Assembly. It was during this debate that Lameth uttered the famous phrase, "the wealth of the clergy is national property," so ominous for the future of the church and the clergy. Sieyès, who had heretofore been conspicuous among the revolutionary leaders, now came out in defence of the tithes and property of the church. He was listened to with growing impatience, and seeing that his arguments made no impression upon the Assembly, he reproached them, saying, "You would be free, but you know not how to be just."

The decrees abolishing feudalism were drawn up in fourteen articles and sent to the king on August 11th and Paris gave itself up to a celebration in honour of the event. In the country districts, the news was received in a different spirit and produced an unexpected outbreak among the peasants. When the news arrived from Paris that "all feudal rights are abolished," the peasants, taking these words literally, proceeded to refuse all payments to the seigneurs and to attack the chateaux. Disorders broke out in many parts of France, and the bourgeoisie, becoming alarmed, united with the noblesse to put down the riots and re-establish order.

During these days between the 5th and the 9th of August, the session of the Assembly had been interrupted, in its deliberations

<sup>25</sup> Toulangeon, "Histoire de la Révolution," Vol. I, p. 103.

on the Declaration of Rights, by the invitation of Necker to consider the condition of the country and the needs of the treasury. He asked for authority to issue a loan for thirty million francs. This led to an animated discussion, and the loan was finally granted at 4 per cent instead of at 5 per cent which Necker had advised. The financial world was much disturbed at this and refused to take up the loan. "The capitalists and stock-brokers," says Ferrières, "alarmed by the disposition which the deputies of the provinces had shown, refused to interest themselves in the loan; they did more, they hindered its success; feeling the necessity to arrest, at its beginning, the enterprises of the Assembly, they wished to show that as they alone had made the force of the Revolution of the 14th of July, so they could destroy it, if it insisted on working against their interests."<sup>26</sup>

It was after this time, that Paris began to follow with deep interest the proceedings of the Assembly and that the idea was suggested of transferring the National Assembly to Paris. The financiers recognised that if they were to exert an influence upon the Assembly, they must not rely only upon Necker. They now planned to get into touch with a group of the Assembly who would forward their interests. Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, Mirabeau, Chapelier, and Barnave were selected as the members of greatest influence, and a close alliance was made between them and the financial group. The effect of this was soon seen in the proposition of Talleyrand to reaffirm the public credit and by a decree which renewed and confirmed the decrees of the 14th of July and 30th of June by which the creditors of the state were put under the safeguard and honour and loyalty of Frenchmen and consequently it declared that in no case, under no pretext, could there be any new reduction whatsoever in any part of the public debt.

This proposition was opposed by some members of the Assembly, but their opposition raised a great outcry by all the supporters of the financial interests who held that "the kingdom was lost" if they dissented for a single instant from recognising the great principles proposed by the Bishop of Autun. "The Assembly, humiliated by the reproaches of Necker, frightened by the menaces of the capitalists, adopted the decree, and sacrificed, by a culpable weakness, the provinces to Paris, the proprietors to the capitalists and stock-brokers of Paris."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 191.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

The Assembly now returned to its work on the Declaration of Rights.

On August 17th, Mirabeau presented for the committee of five their project of a Declaration of Rights in nineteen articles. In introducing his report, he said, "We have sought that popular form which appeals to the people, not what has been studied in books or in abstract meditations, but what experience has taught. . . . It is thus that the Americans have made their Declaration of Rights; they have, by design, discarded science from it; they have presented the political views which they endeavoured to establish, under a form which could be easily divined by the people, to whom alone liberty is of consequence, and who alone can maintain it."<sup>28</sup>

This declaration was not at all satisfactory to the Assembly; for it lacked both conciseness and clearness of statement. Its first article, which is characteristic of all the others, stands in marked contrast with that which the Assembly finally adopted. It reads, "All men are born free and equal; not one of them has more rights than another to make use of his natural or acquired faculties; this right, common to all, has no other limit than the same conscience of him who exercises it; which he is forbidden to make use of to the detriment of his fellow-beings."

Article V reads, "The law, being the expression of the general will, ought to be general in its object, and to always tend to assure to every citizen, liberty, property, and civil equality."<sup>29</sup>

There is an interesting story connected with the drawing up of this Declaration. Dumont tells us, "The united National Assembly commenced their proceedings with the famous Declaration on the Rights of Man. The idea was American, and there was scarcely a member who did not consider such a declaration an indispensable preliminary. I well remember the long debate on the subject, which lasted several weeks, as a period of mortal ennui. . . . The assembly had converted itself into a Sorbonne, and each apprentice in the art of legislation was trying his yet unfledged wings upon such puerilities. After the rejection of several models, a committee of five members was appointed to present a new one. Mirabeau, one of the five, undertook the work with his usual generosity, but imposed its execution upon his friends.

"He set about the task, and there were Mirabeau, Duroverai, Clavière, and I, writing, disputing, adding, striking out, and ex-

<sup>28</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, pp. 270-2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

hausting both time and patience upon this ridiculous subject. At length, we produced our piece of patchwork, our mosaic of pretended natural rights which never existed."<sup>30</sup> And it was a mosaic and patchwork which did not commend itself to the Assembly. However, it was sent to the bureau which had the different projects of the Declaration of Rights under consideration. It was said that another Declaration contained twenty articles, another thirty, and still another seventy-six articles. Mirabeau tried to raise the question again of putting the Declaration of Rights at the head of the Constitution, but it was voted down. After much discussion it was decided that the Declaration of Rights should be considered and voted upon in the National Assembly, but the question arose which of the projects would they consider? On the 19th of August, Abbé Bonnefoi made this observation, "After having compared the divers plans of the declaration of rights with M. de la Fayette's, I have seen that this last is the text of which all the others form only the commentary. I find in the plan of M. de Mounier the same maxims augmented with many others. I decide for M. de la Fayette's which is simple and clear, and which unites in a few words the primitive rights of man. I wish only to add: 'Man has a right sacred to his preservation and his peace, and that the Supreme Being has made men free and equal.'"<sup>31</sup>

Lally-Tollendal advocated that the Assembly take the plan of Mounier as the basis of the Assembly's declaration. Others wished that the project of the Sixth Bureau be adopted by the Assembly. It was put to vote and three projects, those of Lafayette, Sieyès, and the Sixth Bureau had the highest votes, but the plan of the Sixth Bureau was adopted. It was said, "When it was a question of choosing between twenty projects of the Declaration of Rights, which were presented after that of Lafayette's, given on July 11th, the fear of seeing the personal name of one of its members attached to its work made it reject them all. The Assembly was then divided into twenty bureaux, which reported a preparatory work; they chose the project of one of the bureaux, the sixth, reserving to itself the right to discuss it article by article."<sup>32</sup>

The project of the Sixth Bureau contained twenty-four articles, but in the discussion which lasted from the 20th to the 26th of August, the scheme was almost wholly modified and changed in

<sup>30</sup> Dumont, "Recollections," p. 112.

<sup>31</sup> "Histoire Parl." Vol. II, p. 304.

<sup>32</sup> Toulangeon, "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 106.

the Assembly, only one article being adopted as written. In this discussion the plan was much simplified and condensed and the final form was a marked improvement upon all the plans which had been presented. In the end the plan of Lafayette formed the basis of the Declaration of Rights. The preamble was changed by introducing the words, "under the auspices of the Supreme Being." After much discussion, the first three articles of the original draft were discarded and three articles proposed by Mounier were adopted; these are:

I. "All men are born, and remain, free and equal in rights; social distinctions cannot be founded but on common utility."

II. "The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance against oppression."

III. "The principle of all *sovereignty* resides essentially in the nation: *no body of men, no individual*, can exercise an authority that does not emanate expressly from that source."

Alexander de Lameth proposed a consolidation of Articles VII, VIII, IX, and X into two articles which, with some minor amendments, were adopted.

IV. "*Liberty* consists in the power of doing everything except that which is hurtful to another; hence, the exercise of the natural rights of every man has no more bounds than those that are necessary to ensure to the other members of society the enjoyment of the same rights; those bounds to be determined by the law only."

V. "The law has a right to forbid those actions alone that are hurtful to society. Whatever is not forbidden by the law cannot be hindered; and no person can be constrained to do that which the law ordaineth not."

Articles XI, XII, and XIII were consolidated into one article proposed by the Bishop of Autun, and adopted.

VI. "The law is the expression of the general will: all the citizens have a right to concur personally, or by their representatives, to the formation of the law: it ought to be the same for all, whether it protect or whether it punish. All citizens being equal in the eye of the law are equally admissible to public honours, places and offices, according to their capacity, and without any other distinction but that of their virtue, or their talents."

Articles XIV and XV of the original draft relating to punishment were changed in accordance with a proposal of Target



and Duport and with some amendments and additions, formulated into Articles VII, VIII, and IX.

VII. "No man can be accused, arrested, or detained except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms which the law hath prescribed. Those who solicit, dispatch, execute, or cause to be executed arbitrary orders, ought to be punished; but every citizen that is summoned, or seized, in virtue of the law, ought to obey instantly—he becomes culpable by resistance."

VIII. "The law ought to establish such punishments only as are strictly and evidently necessary; and no person can be punished, but in virtue of a law established and promulgated prior to the offence, and legally applied.

IX. "Every man being presumed innocent, till such time as he has been declared guilty; if it shall be deemed absolutely necessary to arrest a man every kind of rigour employed, not necessary to secure his person, ought to be severely punished by the law."

These last two articles were suggested by Duport.

Then the Assembly proceeded to consider Articles XVI, XVII, and XVIII which dealt with religion and freedom of opinions. Articles XVII and XVIII read, "The maintenance of religion demands a public worship. The respect for the public worship is therefore indispensable.

"Every citizen who does not disturb the established worship, ought not to be disturbed."

The question of religion raised a bitter discussion in the Assembly.

Prejudices and passions were awakened and the spirit of intolerance was aroused. The Bishop of Clermont opened the discussion by saying, "I demand that the principles of the French Constitution repose on religion as on an eternal base."

Mirabeau made a strong plea for tolerance in religion and Rabaut de Saint Etienne made an address on religious freedom in which he said: "I am the representative of a great people; my seneschal jurisdiction encloses at least 500,000 men, among whom are found 120,000 Protestants; I do not believe that any person can be suspected, because he is of another opinion. I rest upon your principles, and ask that every citizen enjoy the same rights. Your principles are that liberty is a common good. Therefore it belongs to every man; therefore it belongs to all Frenchmen. Those who attack the liberty of others deserve to live in slavery. Liberty is a sacred right, inviolable, which belongs to man by birth; this right extends to all opinions.

Liberty of opinions escapes from all powers; this liberty is concentrated in the heart as in a sanctuary: constraint of this point is an injustice; never have men held their opinions in common. Therefore a man cannot be forced to think as another. 'Worship is a dogma, a dogma holds to opinion, opinion to liberty. It is to attack it to wish to force a man to adopt a dogma different from his own. To act thus, is to be intolerant, unjust; it is to be a persecutor.'

"I demand liberty for those people always proscribed, erring, vagabonds on the globe; those people devoted to humiliation, the Jews."<sup>33</sup>

Finally the Bishop of Lydda proposed that an amendment should be added to the first article, "provided that their manifestation would not trouble public order," and the article as amended reads:

X. "No person shall be molested for his opinions, even such as are religious, provided that the manifestation of those opinions does not disturb the public order established by law."

On Article XIX, relating to the freedom of the press, the Duc de la Rochefoucauld made a strong speech, showing its advantages and proposing the following article, "The free communication of thought and of opinion is one of the most precious rights of man: every citizen, therefore, may freely speak, write, and publish his sentiments; subject to answer for the abuse of that liberty, in cases provided by the law."

Many deputies spoke on these questions, and, among others, Barère de Vieuzac and Robespierre. The opinion of Robespierre showed the drift of his thought at this period. He said, "You ought not to hesitate in frankly declaring liberty of the press. Free men have never been permitted to pronounce their rights in an ambiguous manner; all modification ought to be referred to the Constitution. Despotism alone has invented restrictions; that is how it has succeeded in weakening every right. . . . There is not a tyrant upon earth who would not sign an article as modified as that which is proposed to you. Liberty of the press is an inseparable part from that of communicating thoughts."<sup>34</sup>

The article of the Sixth Bureau was rejected and that of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld adopted in its place.

The next two articles, XX and XXI, provoked much discussion. They dealt with the question of the public force. It was pro-

<sup>33</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 334.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

posed first to consolidate the five remaining articles into one; but Chapelier pointed out that the twentieth article concerned the employment of taxes, and the others the forms of agreeing to them. Finally it was voted to adopt the article of the Sixth Bureau without amendment.

XII. "The guarantee of the rights of men and citizens involves a necessity of *public force*; this force is then instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the particular utility of those to whom it is confided."

XIII. "For the maintenance of the public force, and for the expenses of administration, a common distribution is indispensable. It should be equally divided among all citizens, in proportion to their abilities."

Article XXII of the draft was the cause of much contention owing to the fact that it read "the public contribution being a portion wrested from the property of each citizen." Duport proposed an amendment, that they add the words, "by himself or by his representative." This was adopted and then Robespierre rose and said, "Every tax, it is said, is a retrenched portion of property: I maintain, on the contrary, that it is a portion of property put in common in the hands of the public administrator. I will develop this idea. What is, in effect, an administrator, if he is not the depositary of all public contributions? But is the contrary principle admitted? If it is a retrenched portion of property, it no longer belongs to the nation; and the nation has no more right to render an account of it." He proposed this amendment, "Every public contribution, being a portion of the wealth of the citizens, put in common to supply the expenses of the public security, the nation alone has the right to establish the tax." There was much agitation over this question and many amendments, but it ended in removing the objectionable phrase to which Robespierre referred and the article read:

XIV. "Every citizen has a right, by himself or by his representatives, to decide concerning the necessity of the public contribution; to consent to it freely; to look after the employment of it; and to determine the quantity, the distribution, the collection, and the duration."

The next article was passed as suggested by the Sixth Bureau.

XV. "Society has a right to demand from every public agent an account of his administration."

Article XXII was amended by M. de Lameth and reads:

XVI. "Every society in which the guarantee of rights is not

assured, nor the separation of powers determined, has *no Constitution.*"

The Assembly then added a final article which had not been proposed by the Sixth Bureau. It was an article on property. It was suggested by Duport and was as follows:

XVII. "Property being a right inviolable and sacred, no person can be deprived of it, except when the public necessity, legally ascertained, shall evidently require it, and on condition of a just and previous indemnification."

The completion of the Declaration of Rights marked an epoch in the progress of the Revolution. It raised the standard of democracy for all the world and formulated the principles of government by the people and for the people. The social movement which culminated in the nineteenth century took its start from the Declaration of Rights. The Declaration of Rights owed its impulse to the American Declaration of Independence; and the republican principles which it embodied and the sovereignty of the people which it upheld were largely the result of the contact of the men of '89 with American principles and ideas. The spirit of America is shot through this remarkable document and it breathes the spirit and expresses the thought of the men across the seas who first gave political expression to the principle, that governments rest upon the consent of the governed. The democratic principles once formulated were never forgotten by the men of the Revolution. They became the standard by which these men judged the work of the National Assembly. It was not the intention of the Assembly, however, to carry out these principles to their logical conclusion; for they were planning a Constitution based upon a limited suffrage of active citizens with a small property qualification. In other words, they were preparing to establish the rule of the bourgeois class. This is why many far-seeing men in the Assembly thought it was dangerous to publish a Declaration of Rights whose principles would sustain a form of government based upon universal suffrage. There was a phrase used at the time and referred to later by the radical leaders of the Assembly, that of "rending the veil," or revealing the democratic principles of the Declaration of Rights.

On the 28th of August, the National Assembly turned its attention to the Constitution, and Mounier presented for the committee the chapter on the French Government which included six articles. The first article, that "the French Government is a monarchical government," and the second, "that no legislation

can be considered a law, unless it has been enacted by the deputies of the nation and sanctioned by the monarch," raised a heated and acrimonious debate. Many deputies demanded that the first article be decided only in relation to the second, concerning the royal sanction.

The spirit and tumult of this debate extended beyond the Assembly and created a furor and excitement in Paris and led to a separation of the deputies of the Assembly into two distinct parties, of the Right and Left, who were so called because they took their seats to the right and the left of the president of the Assembly. During the debates on the Declaration of Rights there had been no marked divisions and a general unanimity had prevailed; only a small group of the extreme right and left had shown any party spirit; but now the moderate men were forced to take sides, and as the debate on the Constitution continued and political passions rose higher and party spirit became more bitter, the deputies were driven farther apart. At the same time, there were still a large group of moderate men, who later were known under the name of the "marsh," who wavered between the parties and voted now with one side, and then with the other.

The royalists, or party of the Right, composed of the majority of the noblesse, had for its orator Cazalès, ennobled thirty years before, because they had no men of mark among the old nobility as "most of the men of talent among the ancient gentils-hommes," as Mme. de Staël remarks, "had adopted the popular party."<sup>35</sup>

Cazalès was an eloquent speaker and wished to preserve the monarchy. At an earlier session of the Assembly, he had cried, "Perish the Monarch, but not the monarchy." Among the clergy they had for their spokesman Abbé Maury, an able and eloquent ecclesiastic, wedded to the old régime and the interests of the church. These two elements coalesced into one party during the making of the Constitution, and at critical moments when their votes could decide the issue, this party threw the weight of their influence against the moderates and voted with the extremists. It was this spirit and policy which wrecked the work of moderate men like Mounier, Lally-Tollendal, Clermont-Tonnerre, and Malouet, who sought to form a Constitution after the English model with two chambers and who were in close touch with Necker and the ministers who shared their views. In the early days of September, they held the balance of power in the

<sup>35</sup> De Staël, "Considérations sur la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 298.

Assembly and might have succeeded in their plan of the Constitution but for the tactics of the royalist party.

"Malouet, Lally, Mounier," writes Mme. de Staël, "there were no men more conscientious in the Assembly. But, although Lally was endowed with a superb eloquence, as Mounier was a publicist of the highest wisdom, and Malouet an administrator of the first rank, although without the Assembly, they were sustained by the ministers, having M. Necker at their head, and within the Assembly, many men of merit often rallied to their opinions, the two extreme parties drowned their voices, the most courageous and the purest of them all. But they did not cease to make themselves heard in the desert of this mad crowd. The proud aristocrats could not endure these men who wished to establish a wise, free, and consequently durable Constitution; and they were often seen to give a helping hand more willingly to mad demagogues, whose follies menaced France as well as themselves with a frightful anarchy. It is this which characterised the party spirit, or rather this exaltation of amour-propre which does not allow any divergence from its own point of view."<sup>28</sup>

The party of the Left, or popular party, was composed of all the elements which favoured the Revolution as far as it had gone and who desired a durable Constitution, together with those who hoped that the Revolution could be carried farther. The latter formed the party of the extreme Left which included Buzot, Pétion, and Robespierre. But the active leaders of this group were Duport, a member of the parlement of Paris, a man of strong character and elevation of soul, a thinker and devotee of the new ideas; Lameth, an organiser, a man of fine address who had attained celebrity in America and who desired to play a rôle in the Revolution and hoped that it might be the road by which he might rise to fortune, honours, and the position of minister of the king; and Barnave, a young lawyer of Dauphiné, who had distinguished himself in the assembly of his province by his eloquence and now held one of the first places in the National Assembly as an orator. These three formed a triumvirate which directed their group and took the lead in advocating extreme measures. It was said: "Duport thought what was necessary to do; Barnave said it, and Lameth did it." Their pretensions at first were greeted with laughter, but soon their earnestness impressed the Assembly and the trend of events played into their hands.

The mass of the party of the Left were sober and thoughtful

<sup>28</sup> De Staël, "Considérations sur la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 299.

men, many of them conspicuous for their ability and talents, who desired to place the principles of liberty on a solid foundation. They included all shades of opinion, from those who desired a moderate Constitution to those who determined at all costs to assure the sovereignty of the people. These were the men who did the hard work on the committees and were content to efface themselves and sacrifice their personal ambitions for the public good.<sup>37</sup>

United with the popular party were the small group of enlightened nobles, who had absorbed the liberal ideas of the eighteenth century and who, by conviction and by principle, were devoted to the regeneration of the state and demanded a liberal Constitution. They were led by the Duc d'Aiguillon, Charles de Lameth, Baron de Menou, Marquis Victor Broglie, Marquis de Montmorency, Marquis de Noailles, and the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, the friend of Lafayette. It was said that the Duc de la Rochefoucauld was a man of mature age, sane judgment, marked by the integrity of his intentions and equally respected by all parties.

The policy of the Left was largely directed by the members of the Breton Club to which the liberal nobles belonged, under the leadership of Chapelier. Independent of these groups, but at times dominating their policy and even that of the Assembly, stands Mirabeau, the greatest orator and genius of the Assembly. Not without influence on the march of events was Lafayette, devoted to the American system and indirectly through his friends determining the decisions of the Assembly.

Amid these diversities of opinions and interests, the Assembly met on August 29th to continue its work on the Constitution. The Marquis de Noailles, ever eager for distinction and prominence, claimed the attention of the Assembly by proposing to consider without reference to other issues three questions: 1. To decide what was understood by the royal sanction; 2. If the sanction is necessary for legislative acts; 3. In what circumstances and in what manner ought the sanction to be used?

These questions were thrown like a bomb-shell into the midst of the Assembly and produced an acrimonious discussion which served to reveal the divergent views of the parties. Mounier tried to bring the Assembly back to a less controversial question by proposing that the Assembly consider the nature of the legislative body before taking up the question of the royal sanction. Dr. Guillotine proposed that the questions of the legislative

<sup>37</sup> Toulangeon, "Histoire de la Révolution," Vol. I, p. 111.

body and the royal sanction be referred to a committee and the discussion be put off until the next Monday. In this he was supported by Saint-Jean d'Angely, but cries of disapproval broke out from all parts of the hall, and they demanded the discussion of the question and a division. Then there broke out a tumult in which party passions and anger gave rise to suspicions and a voice was heard directed to the benches of the noblesse saying, "Bad citizens." The president tried to restore order, but his voice was drowned in the clamours of the Assembly. Finally when calm was restored, M. Rhédon ascended the tribune and said, "No one can say that France is being formed into a monarchical State; but we ought to tell everybody that France is a monarchical State; and why? Because it is the will of our constituents. It is not a new establishment that must be made; it is only a simple declaration. It is the same with the royal sanction. That is not a right which we are going to create, it is a right which we are going to recognise. . . . What do our cahiers say? They all show that the laws will only be executed when they will be made by the nation and sanctioned by the king." To the objection that times had changed since the cahiers were formulated and that they did not foresee a division in the Assembly on the question of two chambers, Rhédon replied, "I consent: but that is no reason to depart from the mandates which circumscribe us or to avoid the oath which we have taken."<sup>38</sup>

These statements were applauded by the Assembly, but Pétion spoke in opposition to Rhédon, contending that the cahiers did not determine the extent of the royal sanction. Others representing the royalist party held that they were only there to confirm the ancient monarchy, and as the royal sanction existed, there was no need to raise this question. The question was put to vote and the Assembly decided to consider the questions proposed by M. de Noailles.

But the arena of discussion now passed from the Assembly to Paris and the city was soon in a ferment over the question of the veto. The royalists claimed that, without the royal sanction, the monarchy no longer existed. On the contrary, the popular party held that, if the veto was sustained, they had two equal rights, that of the king and that of the nation, and that the principle of the sovereignty of the people would be destroyed.

These discussions pervaded all public places and were the subject of private conversation in the drawing-rooms and on the

<sup>38</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 363.



streets. The most ignorant people debated the question and some imagined that the veto was a terrible thing or a dangerous person. "One man asked from what district it was; and another suggested that they should bring him to the lantern. People made a joke of this terrible instrument under which the Revolution had driven men to death." But the Palais Royal became the centre of opposition to the veto and in these tumultuous gatherings of the people, they passed resolutions condemning the veto and saying that if it passed, "in three days France would be enslaved and Europe with it." They sent threatening letters to many of the deputies who supported the veto and threatened to march on Versailles with an army of 15,000 men. Later 1,500 men made the attempt, but Lafayette closed the barriers and dispersed the mob.

The session of August 31st opened with a reading of these threatening letters by Lally-Tollendal and Clermont-Tonnerre. Some deputies thought the Assembly should not deliberate under the menace of Paris and should be removed to a distance. Dupont with more feeling for the dignity and authority of the Assembly and the position of its deputies, said, "We have not been sent by our provinces to be intimidated by the menaces of the factious. We have deliberated in the midst of 30,000 armed men, commanded by an experienced chief, and should we fear fifteen or twenty thousand men without any plan, formed into a republic, without laws, without a constitution, even in the midst of their faction? It is here that we ought to save the State, even at the risk of our lives; it is here that we ought to deliberate in the midst of terror; at least let us give an eternal example of the fidelity which we owe to the service of our country."<sup>89</sup>

The Assembly then decided to continue the consideration of the question of the royal sanction and Mounier introduced the report of the committee on the legislative body. Its principal provisions were: the permanence of the national assemblies; the Constitution to be passed without the royal sanction, but a royal sanction for legislative acts in the future; two chambers; the dissolution of the legislative chamber by the king.

The debates which followed were marked by their tempestuous character and by the rage of party passions. Mirabeau spoke in favour of the veto in a speech marked for its eloquence and power. Sieyès opposed him and advocated a single chamber and no veto. His ideas were well expressed in this statement: "I define the law as the will of the governed; therefore those who

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 372.

govern ought to have no part in its formation . . . the king may be considered as citizen, as king, and as chief executive power; as a citizen he has only the influence of any other citizen by his individual will; as king, he may preside at all assemblies and pronounce the law made by the nation or their representatives; as chief of the executive power, he is only the mandatory, and his functions are limited to execute the law which is confided to him."

Moreover, as the debate continued, the Assembly recognised that other questions must be settled before they could decide upon the royal sanction; these were, whether the legislative body would be permanent and whether it would be composed of one or two chambers?

Rabaut de Saint-Etienne showed the mutual dependence of these two questions and their effect upon the royal veto and urged that this be postponed until these two questions had been determined. In spite of the protests of the noblesse and some of the deputies of the Commons, Lally introduced the plan for two chambers. It was as follows: "The legislative body will be divided into two chambers; the first under the name of the representatives, composed of six hundred members elected by the people; the second under the name of the Senate, composed of two hundred members, named for life by the King, on the presentation of the departments.' The two chambers will have the negative or the veto the one on the other and the King will have the negative on the two chambers."<sup>40</sup>

In reality this plan of Lally and Mounier was that of Necker, who hoped that by the power of appointment of senators for life he would be able to dominate the legislation of the National Assembly. By his position as first minister of the king and his control over the numerous agents of the administration of the provinces, he could dictate the choice of the senators.

"Two hundred places for senators, natural objects of the ambition of all, since they would be the first in the State, presented to Necker a sure means to attach to his interests those whose talents and votes would be most useful for his designs." Moreover, the minority of the nobles had for a long time been sustained with the hope that they would be elevated to a new position of power in the Upper Chamber and had supported with eagerness the plans of Necker; but the majority of the nobles, realising this design, threw their votes against the Upper Chamber. The discussion became tempestuous and for a time the session

<sup>40</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 207.

was suspended. Lally had ascended the tribune and Mounier was going around the benches of the Commons urging them to sustain his plan, but without effect. Confused cries drowned the voice of Lally and he waited to obtain silence, when the fury of the Assembly turned upon the Bishop of Langres who presided over the Assembly: they reproached him with sending Lally to the tribune; the bishop tried to justify himself and entered into a long discussion until Dubois de Crane asked him if he was not weary of tiring the Assembly? The bishop in anger raised the session; the cries redoubled; and then disgusted with the outrageous manner in which he had been treated, he resigned his place and "left the chair in the midst of insulting applause."<sup>41</sup>

The session was postponed until the next day and the night was spent in intrigues. While the debate was in progress, rumours were circulated that there existed a coalition between the noblesse, the clergy, and one hundred members of the Commons to give the king the absolute veto and that he would use it to veto the decrees of the 4th of August, and that liberty was menaced. The popular party became alarmed and sought to get together on some common ground of action. With this end in view, Lafayette brought together at the home of Jefferson a group of deputies, composed of members from all the parties of the Left. Jefferson gives this account of the meeting. "When they arrived, there were Lafayette, Dupont, Barnave, Alexander Lameth, Blagou, Mounier, Maibourg, and Dagout. These were the leading patriots, of honest but differing opinions, sensible of the necessity of effecting a coalition by mutual sacrifices, knowing each other, and not afraid, therefore, to frankly unbosom themselves. Lafayette stated at this meeting that a "common opinion must now be formed or the aristocracy would carry everything, and that whatever they would agree on, he, at the head of the national guard, would maintain."<sup>42</sup>

Jefferson writing to Mr. Jay at this time, said, "They discussed together their points of difference for six hours, and in the course of the discussion agreed upon mutual sacrifices. The effect of this agreement has been considerably defeated by the subsequent proceedings of the Assembly, but I do not know that it has been through any infidelity of the leaders to the compromise they had agreed upon."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 215.

<sup>42</sup> Works of Jefferson, Vol. I, p. 104.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 117.

Lafayette in his account of the meeting, says, "At the conference which took place in September 1789, at the home of Mr. Jefferson, then American ambassador, between the members of the popular party, on the formation of the legislative body, Lafayette strongly opposing every creation of a Chamber of Peers, or Senate appointed by the King, he showed no personal repugnance to unite the parties by a compromise which established a Council of Ancients, provided that it was not hereditary and that it was also elected by the people."<sup>44</sup>

Mounier who represented the moderate party favoured the absolute veto and a House of Peers; Lameth and Barnave were for the suspensive veto and the single chamber. The compromise seemed to have been made on the suspensive veto in which Lafayette believed, and an elective second chamber. As it turned out, the compromise was defeated and the Assembly voted for the single chamber and the suspensive veto. The reason for this failure of the popular leaders to carry out their plans was due to two things: first, that the public of Paris, and especially at the Palais Royal, became intensely agitated over the absolute veto and feared that the king would use its power to wreck the Constitution and this affected the votes of many of the deputies of the Left; secondly, that the aristocratic party, at the crisis of the debate, threw their votes against the moderates and voted with the extremists, thus deciding the question in favour of the single chamber and the suspensive veto. This was done with the deliberate purpose of wrecking the Constitution and in the hope of regaining their power through the excess of evils and disgusting the people with the new order of things. The vote for the suspensive veto was taken on September 11th, and was carried by the great majority of 673 to 325 votes. This vote settled the fate of the Constitution and practically placed it upon a democratic basis.

On the 16th of September, the king sent to the Assembly his reply to the decrees of the 4th of August. While he approved of them in principle, yet he took exception to those relating to the tithes which were abolished without redemption, saying, "I do not know whether the National Assembly realises to what extent the ecclesiastical tithes are valued. Their value amounts to at least seventy to eighty millions. When the finances are in a condition which demands all the resources of the State, it is wise to determine, at the moment when the representatives of the nation dispose of a great part of the revenue of the clergy,

<sup>44</sup> *Mémoires*, Vol. II, p. 203.

if these revenues should not be applied to the relief of the entire nation." <sup>45</sup>

This criticism was probably suggested by Necker, who had looked forward to using the tax on the tithes to replenish the treasury, and the clergy under the leadership of the Archbishop of Bordeaux were strenuously opposed to the abolition of the tithes. The nobles complained that they were sacrificed and that the reservations in the decree were made only in the interest of the clergy. The popular party "were indignant that the ministry dared to discuss the decrees, and appealed to the public to judge between the Assembly and the ministry."

The king went as far in his criticism as he dared and he hoped to delay action by creating a discord in the Assembly. It was not known then, but has been revealed since, that he was utterly opposed to the decrees of the 4th of August and he began then that policy of dissimulation in his dealings with the Assembly which he pursued throughout the next two years. In a secret letter written on the 26th of August, to the Archbishop of Arles, he wrote, "I am satisfied with the great, noble, and generous proceedings of the States; they have made an immense sacrifice towards a general reconciliation, for their country, and their King. I feel engraven on my heart the transactions of that sitting in which all privileges were renounced. But this sacrifice, however splendid, I can only admire; for I never will consent to despoil my clergy and nobility. I will not deprive the former of the rights which the Gallican church has acquired by ancient possession by the voice of the faithful, and by the munificence of my royal ancestors; nor will I suffer the latter to be stripped of all that constituted their glory, of the rewards of their services, of those titles, those recompenses, due to the civil and military virtues of the French nobility. They have merited by great actions those privileges, which it is the duty of the King of France to defend; and I will never give my sanction to decrees which tend to their annihilation; since, were I capable of doing so, the French nation might well accuse me, one day, of injustice or weakness. You, my lord archbishop, submit yourself to the decrees of Providence, while I believe that I manifest also my submission, by not abandoning myself to the torrent of enthusiasm which hurries on all the different orders of the State, but which only glides lightly over the surface of my soul. I will do all in my power to preserve my clergy and my nobility; and, should the will of the people decide against it, I shall have

<sup>45</sup> Ferrières, Vol. I, p. 235.

fulfilled my duty. If superior force obliges me to grant my sanction, I must yield; but there will then remain in France neither monarchy nor monarch, things which can only exist where the clergy form a venerable and august order, and where the nobility enjoy a certain preponderance, and can place themselves between the king and the people. I know, my lord, that the moment is critical: we stand in need of the illumination of heaven; deign to invoke that illumination; and we shall be heard from above."<sup>46</sup>

For a king who held these sentiments, the prospects for the establishment of a constitutional régime were not very bright. A conflict was inevitable between the forces of the monarchy and the forces of the people.

With a sure instinct the Assembly saw that the king must sanction the constitutional principles, or there would be no Constitution. The popular party did not have any intention of allowing the king to destroy their work or mutilate the Constitution. Mirabeau at once took the ground that the decrees of the 4th of August were not laws, but constitutional principles; and Barnave stated the position of the party when he said, "I hold that the decrees of the 4th of August have been issued previously to the law of the suspensive veto; this last right was not in the natural rights of the monarch; it is you who have granted it to him; the King, therefore, cannot, by right, suspend the decrees accepted and already announced in all the kingdom. The people, appeased and satisfied, count on their prompt execution. The least doubt, in this respect, will soon lead to the re-awakening of trouble."

Chapelier spoke in the same strain, urging the Assembly to fix the terms of the sanction and holding that all conference or examination of the decrees would be destructive to the authority which the people had confided in the Assembly. It was finally determined to ask the king again to accept the decrees with the suggestion that the details of the laws would be considered later in conference with the king. But the same spirit which opposed these decrees was shown by the king in regard to the Declaration of Rights and the laws of the New Constitution and it was this attitude of the king that created the fear among the people of his sincerity and was one of the contributing causes of the insurrection of the 5th and 6th of October.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, "Correspondence of Louis XVI," 1803, Vol. I, p. 203.

## CHAPTER IV

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### THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRACY: RÉPUBLIQUE DES CORDELIERS

WHEN the French Republic in 1889 wished to select a day which would commemorate the anniversary of the beginning of the republic, it chose the 14th of July, 1789; for it was on that day that the people were called into action by the Assembly and became conscious of their power. From that date, the democratic movement began in France and gained in strength as the Revolution advanced and came a step nearer to its goal with each great event which marked its progress. The night of the 4th of August, when the decrees were passed which abolished feudalism, and the day of the 26th of August, when the Declaration of the Rights of Man was finally passed, were two milestones which marked the advent of democracy and established its principles in the minds of the people. However much the leaders of the Revolution might try later to disguise the fact, they could not hide from the people that the principles of the Rights of Man included all men in the principle of the sovereignty of the people and must inevitably bring the people into the political arena. The discussion on the Constitution, the debates on the veto, and the organisation of the legislative body only served to emphasise this principle. The electors of Paris were not slow to recognise the logical deductions from the assertion of these new rights which the Assembly, by the force of the Revolution, had been compelled to assert, in order to maintain their power against the king and the nobility.

At this period, in the sixty districts of Paris, we see the new democracy organising itself and the bourgeois leaders teaching the people their rights and urging them to agitate on the political questions of the day.

It was this emergence of the democracy in Paris that alarmed many deputies of the Assembly and frightened the financiers of the bourgeois class.

It was this spectre of the coming democracy that induced some of them to listen to overtures for a counter-revolution and enlisted them in the plot to restore the old régime and the power of the

king. But the popular press, as interpreted by Loustallot and Camille Desmoulins, accepted at its face value the principles of the Rights of Man; and all through this critical month of September, they appealed to the people as men and as citizens. To them the principles of the Constitution, formulated and passed by the National Assembly, meant the triumph of the "royal democracy." They ignored the distinctions suggested by Sieyès of active and passive citizens and treated the burning political questions of the time as issues to be decided by all the citizens.

Near the centre of Paris, where this movement took its rise, is found the district of the Cordeliers, on the left bank of the Seine in the old part of the city. It was here that the first foyer of democracy was organised and where men of advanced opinions and liberal principles took counsel together and discussed the vital questions of the day. This district was composed of small shop-keepers, book-sellers, and young lawyers who daily met in the hall of the Cordeliers and soon became known as disciples of the Rights of Man. Among their leaders, Danton stood out as the chief director and organiser. Very early in the revolutionary movement, the political tactics of the district earned for it from the royalists the derisive title, "République de Cordeliers."

For they took the lead in all extreme measures in opposition to the more moderate plans of the bourgeois commune and raised the signal of danger whenever the reactionary spirit threatened the rights of the people. It was the activity and opposition of this district which forced upon the Commune of Paris a democratic representation and prevented Mayor Bailly and Lafayette from establishing the complete domination of the bourgeois class. One of its members described later the influence of the Cordeliers on the progress of the Revolution. He says: "The ancient district of the Cordeliers was the terror of the aristocracy and the refuge of all the oppressed of the capital. Its vigorous decrees have more than once disconcerted the municipal despotism which raised itself upon the ruins of every tyranny. If the other districts of Paris had manifested the same degree of patriotism and of energy as that of the Cordeliers, the Revolution would not have been arrested in its course, the committees of the National Assembly would not have traded the rights of the people with the monarch; the most fatal decrees would not have contrasted in a manner so revolting with our immortal declaration; a salutary terror would have filled the souls of the traitors who swarmed in the Senate, the seat of ministerial corruption; the Commune of Paris, far from being subjected and degraded by its mandates,



would have presented a bold front, nor would it have seen the insolent shopmen loaç with inextricable chains the hands of their constituents.

"An active and severe surveillance would have been exercised on all the expenses of the municipal administration! The most industrious and respectable part of the people made the Revolution which gave birth to liberty, not for themselves, but for us—that numerous portion of Frenchmen would not have been banished from our assemblies; a brass wall raised by the aristocracy of wealth, would not have separated citizens from citizens."<sup>1</sup>

This pre-eminence, which the district of the Cordeliers attained later, was not so marked at this period of the Revolution. Then nearly all the districts were alarmed by the discussions in the Assembly over the veto and the Upper Chamber. Political organisation was not yet crystallised on strict lines and the districts were disturbed by an influx of men whom the Revolution had brought to the surface and the public forum of liberty at the Palais Royal had filled with utopian and sinister ideas. In the fear which the rumours of a counter-revolution had awakened and the fierceness of party passions had fostered, many good men stayed away from the assemblies of the districts, and men of radical ideas, and even unscrupulous principles, were often allowed to take the lead. Ferrières, royalist writer and naturally inclined to exaggerate the failings of the people, is probably not far wrong when he tells us of the wild ideas which pervaded many of the districts at this time. "The districts, composed of men of gross ignorance and absolute inexperience in matters of administration, of workers transported from their factories, from their forges, from their shops, into the midst of public deliberations, offered to the eyes of the observer the ridiculous spectacle of a gross Saturnalia; the most extravagant motions were those most usually adopted. Lawyers, practical men, intriguers as ignorant as crafty, dominated these noisy assemblies; they had driven away the educated citizens, casting upon them the suspicion of aristocracy, and hurling at them with each phrase the words liberty, civicism, sovereignty of the people. Proud of seeing themselves clothed with the authority of the ancient police, they exercised a most vexatious tyranny; pronouncing arbitrary decisions; arresting and imprisoning the citizens on the slightest pretext."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bougeart, "Life of Danton," quoted from Fréron's "L'Orateur du Peuple," p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 199.

Undoubtedly the districts assumed powers which properly belonged to the commune and it was the cause of many disputes with the mayor and the communal council. All the districts claimed the right to organise committees of police, a military committee, a civil committee, and a committee on subsistence. And they passed and placarded laws on these subjects, many times in opposition to those of the Hôtel de Ville. Thus the district of the Cordeliers under the direction of Danton voted to tax all the citizens for the maintenance of the poor of the district; and it issued a protest against the arrest of a writer, demanding the freedom of the press. It was also in the same district that the spectators in the Théâtre Français, now the Odéon, demanded with loud cries the production of the play of Charles IX, written by Chénier, which had been forbidden by the municipality. The people raised the cry of "no censure" and in the end the government at the Hôtel de Ville was forced to concede to the popular demand.

Since July 14th, Paris had been stirred and public opinion excited by the newspapers which were founded and published in the interest of the Revolution, and during August and September, a multitude of journals appeared and the controversies in the press served to increase the public fermentation. In June, Mirabeau had founded the *Courrier de Provence* and Barère, the *Point du Jour*; Brissot published *Le Patriote Français*, and Prudhomme founded the *Révolutions de Paris*, of which Loustalot became the editor; a little later, Camille Desmoulins founded *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*. In September, *Le Courrier National Observateur* was issued by Feydel; *Les Annales Patriotiques*, by Carra, and one of the best revolutionary papers, *La Chronique de Paris*, was founded by Condorcet and edited by Rabaut de Saint-Etienne. The royalists also entered the field of journalism and founded two papers in September which tried to burlesque the Revolution and hold the patriots up to ridicule; one, *La Gazette de Paris*, edited by Durozoy, and the other, *Les Actes des Apôtres*, edited by Pelletier.

To add to the excitement created by the press, the public forum at the Palais Royal under the leadership of such men as Loustalot, Danton, Desmoulins, Bentabole, and other lawyers and literary men increased the fermentation. Here resolutions were passed condemning the deputies who supported the absolute veto and the suggestion was made that this question should be referred to the districts. One of the orators expressed the general feeling of the meeting when he said: "There are, they say, more than

400 aristocratic deputies; ah, well, Gentlemen, give to the provinces the great example of punishing them by a revocation. But it is not at the Palais Royal but in the districts that you can legally express your opinion on the veto, and examine if your deputies are faithful to their mandates. I understand that it is difficult to obtain a special general assembly of the districts; I believe that if you should address the assembly of the representatives, requesting it to appoint a general assembly of the districts, you would obtain it. Then your deliberations would be very simple; does or does not the Commune wish to accord the veto to the King?" The address was followed with applause and the cry arose, "To the city! to the city! for a general assembly of the districts, no veto, down with the aristocrats, down with the tyrants."

A deputation was sent to the Hôtel de Ville and it advocated the following articles: "1. Is it the opinion of the commune assembled by individuals that the King ought to have the veto, that is to say, the right of refusing or adopting the transactions of the legislative body; and will the commune accord or refuse him that portion which belongs to him of the legislative power?

"2. Is the commune satisfied with its deputies at the National Assembly? Will it confirm them?

"3. If it revokes some of them, whom will it nominate as electors to select other deputies?

"4. Does it consent to give to these new deputies, or to accord to the old ones, an express mandate to refuse the veto to the King, and to leave to the nation the entire exercise of the legislative power?

"5. Finally, to decree that the National Assembly will suspend its deliberations on the veto, until the districts, as well as the provinces, have pronounced upon it." These articles were signed by Loustallot, lawyer; Bentabole, lawyer; Baillot, man of letters; Peyard, geometrician; and Lescot, Colard, merchants.<sup>3</sup>

The assembly at the Hôtel de Ville refused to grant permission for the assemblies of the districts and a second and a third deputation from the Palais Royal met the same refusal; but far from checking the ardour of the democrats, on September 1st they began to raise the question of the veto in the districts. The Assembly of the commune adhered to its refusal and issued a proclamation in which it was said: "The Assembly declares, that it persists in its decrees against the mobs and the motions at

<sup>3</sup>"Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 376.

the Palais Royal; consequently, it charges the commanding general to employ all the forces of the Commune against the disturbers of the public peace; to arrest them and put them in prison, their trial to be determined by the character of their offences."<sup>4</sup>

Loustallot describes what happened at the Palais Royal that evening: "In the evening, the Café de Foy was full of men, who listened with eagerness to the reading of an opinion on the veto. Each phrase roused the most vivid applause, and those who were without demanded to hear the reading. Suddenly, the applause was changed into cries of indignation: 'A bas! non, non, infâme!' A plan of a Constitution with veto, senate, etc., was being read. The cries without responded to those within. The patrol thought there was a tumult; they entered into the café; the sight of arms frightened some of the listeners. They broke the glass in climbing out of the windows; many were wounded by the glass. The café was soon empty and closed."

But the districts were not prevented from holding a meeting. The same evening, the district of the Capuchins Saint-Honoré sent a deputation to the commune, demanding that a deputation be sent to the National Assembly to ask it to suspend its decision on the veto until the views of the constituents were known. The city government replied that Paris had no right to suspend the deliberations of the Assembly. During the discussion of the veto in the National Assembly from September 1st to the 11th, Paris continued to demand that the decision of the veto be referred to the people. In most of the districts no agreement was arrived at; but in others the party which had sent the representatives to the commune triumphed.

In the meantime, the city of Rennes had addressed a petition to the National Assembly urging that the decision of the veto be referred to the people. This petition raised a storm in the National Assembly which declared it an infringement of its rights. Marat protested against this in *Le Publiciste Parisien* in which he said: "Nothing so natural as the deliberations of the citizens of the city of Rennes, nothing so just as the principles which they have laid down, nothing so strange as the protests which it has excited, and nothing more odious than the motions to which it has given rise—— If the deliberations of Rennes needed a zealous defender, there was the Comte de Mirabeau. But, in place of espousing the cause of the nation, he has assumed

<sup>4</sup>"Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 380.

an important tone towards it, raising the authority of the deputies above that of their constituents." <sup>5</sup>

Camille Desmoulins was even more vehement, and wrote in his *Discours de la Lanterne aux Parisiens*, "When M. de Lally proposed to the National Assembly an upper chamber, a plenary court and two hundred senators with seats for life, by royal nomination; when he made the two hundred rewards to the traitors shine before all our eyes, why did not Chapelier, Barnave, Pétion, Target, Gregoire, Robespierre, Biauzat, Volney, Mirabeau, and all the Bretons—why did not these faithful defenders of the people tear their garments in sign of grief? Why did they not cry, it is blasphemy! I ask if a motion more destructive of liberty can be conceived than that of proposing an absolute veto, and completing the evils of the aristocracy." <sup>6</sup>

The outbreak of the radical press was in some degree checked by the patrols refusing to allow these papers to circulate, so that Loustallot complained of the "bourgeois despotism, having for its end the substitution of an aristocracy of wealth for that of the noblesse."

Moreover, a new plan of municipal organisation had been proposed at the end of August, which was to establish a general council of three hundred persons, a small council of sixty, and an administrative bureau of twenty-one. On the 28th, the assembly of the commune decreed that "the plan of the municipality would be preceded by a preamble containing the Declaration of the Rights of the Commune."

But the march of events turned the commune aside from considering these questions, and in order to hasten the new organisation, it decreed that each of the sixty districts name five deputies for the assembly of three hundred and that it name immediately the council of the city and its officers and organise the various departments; "the districts are advised that, whatever plan they adopt, the municipality ought, it is true, to concentrate the power in a few hands, but that this power ought to be always watched by a council sufficiently large to prevent an oligarchy."

Some such plan was felt by the bourgeoisie and Mayor Bailly to be necessary. It was said that each district worked as a separate commune, and in many sections the committees held that they had the right to issue munitions to its citizens. One of the districts in August had urged that a decree be passed to put an

<sup>5</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 411.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 413.

end to this state of things which would lead to fatal consequences and "if they are not destroyed, would divide the capital into sixty independent republics."<sup>7</sup>

The fear of famine added to the responsibility of the mayor, and the people were continually agitated through the fear that the bakers would not be supplied with flour to make bread. Though the harvest was abundant that fall, speculators had bought up the grain and the agitation in the capital led the farmers to keep back their wheat. In the meantime, the king had sent to the National Assembly his message criticising the decree of August 4th, but the Palais Royal was under the watchful eye of Lafayette and its meetings were more restrained in their revolutionary ardour. The Assembly of the three hundred new representatives met at the Hôtel de Ville on the 19th of September and the question of subsistence was the great matter which occupied them and the districts. Nevertheless Marat gave expression to some warnings in regard to the future. He said:

"I beseech my readers, I beseech them to observe with care that the articles to be sanctioned, on which the King or rather his ministers, have raised difficulties, are those of the indemnification of pecuniary ground-rent, of the suppression of the tithes without having provided for the needs of the prelates, of the suppression of the venality of charges, of the suppression of the pensions, etc. They have only, therefore, the end in view of the refusal of the sanction, to preserve a formidable party, of the clergy, the order of Malta, the judges, the merchants, the financiers, and the innumerable crowd of creatures whom the Prince buys with the State revenues.

"I beseech them also to observe that in refusing to execute with rigour the decree of the circulation and exportation of grains, they seek to preserve for themselves the means of continuing to monopolise them, and of reducing the people to famine. I beseech them still to observe that they await only the work on the finances to arrest the works of the National Assembly, to reduce to smoke the great work of the Constitution, and to put the people again in chains.

"Behold thus my fears on the dangers of the false course which the Assembly has followed for two months, justified by the event. . . . Behold then the Prince, supreme umpire of the law, seeking to oppose the Constitution, even before the first draft has been made. Behold then these ministers, so ridiculously exalted, thinking only of replacing in the hands of the mon-

<sup>7</sup>"Histoire Parl.," Vol. II, p. 420.

arch the chains of despotism, which the nation has thrown down."<sup>8</sup>

Marat's newspaper was of very great influence; for it had an enormous circulation at that time. We know that the *Révolution de Paris* had, later, 200,000 subscriptions and Marat's paper may have been sold in the same quantity.

But the air was charged with sinister rumours and there were signs of a counter-revolutionary plot. The adherents of the nobility and clergy walked the streets of Paris, wearing black cockades and saying that the days of the Revolution would be short. There were rumours of the king's preparation for flight to Metz and this together with the impending famine, with the lack of bread, with the long queues at the doors of the bakers, furnished all the elements for an explosion. It was said that the Orleanist party was plotting to take advantage of this situation and rouse the people in insurrection.

Writing to Mr. Jay on September 18th, Mr. Jefferson said: "Civil war is much talked of and expected; and this talk and expectation has a tendency to beget it. What are the events which may produce it?" And after enumerating the want of bread and the danger of bankruptcy, he laid the most stress upon the rumours of the absconding of the king from Versailles, and said, "This has for some time been apprehended as possible. In consequence of this apprehension, a person whose information would have weight, wrote to the Count de Montmorin, adjuring him to prevent it by every possible means, and assuring him that the flight of the King would be the signal of a Barthelemi against the aristocrats of Paris, and perhaps throughout the kingdom. M. de Montmorin showed the letter to the Queen, who assured him solemnly that no such thing was in contemplation. His showing it to the Queen proves that he entertained the same mistrust with the public."<sup>9</sup>

That Jefferson was not misinformed is evident from the revelations of Malouet in his "Mémoires" published many years later. He says, "We were then in the last days of August. We returned to the home of M. de Montmorin towards nine o'clock in the evening. M. Necker was there; it was the day of the council, but the King had just returned from hunting very fatigued; he had put off the council until the morrow. The two ministers judged like ourselves that there was no time to lose; they went again to the Chateau and wished to make us come with them;

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 454.

<sup>9</sup> Works of Jefferson, Vol. III, p. 118.

but Mgr. de Langres judged very sensibly that our entrance into the house of the King, at the hour of the Council, would be remarked upon, that its result would only have a bad effect. We remained then in the cabinet of M. de Mortmorin to await the issue of the council.

The two ministers did not return until after midnight. They had both strongly approved of our proposition. M. Necker, in entering, said to us with an air of consternation that it had been rejected, the King did not wish to leave Versailles. We insisted on knowing the motives of this strange decision; the ministers would not answer. The Bishop of Langres wished to go and find the King. M. Necker impatiently said to him, 'Monsieur, if you wish to know all, apprehend that our rôle is very painful. The King is good, but difficult in deciding. His Majesty was fatigued; he slept during the council. We were of the opinion for the removal of the Assembly; but the King, on awakening, said 'no and retired. Believe that we are also vexed and above all more embarrassed than you.' We all separated very sad, very disturbed; and some days after, we learned that it had been decided to bring new troops to Versailles."<sup>10</sup>

The secret of this decision was due to the disturbed condition of Paris and possibly in some measure also to a letter which Comte d'Estaing had written to the queen, warning her of a plot by the aristocracy to seize the king and carry him off to Metz. However this may have been, it was undoubtedly the rumours of a counter-revolution that alarmed Lafayette and led him to send a letter to the Minister of the Interior, M. de Saint-Priest, warning him of the condition of Paris and the desire of the French Guards to go to Versailles and bring the king to Paris. This letter is as follows: "Monsieur, M. de la Rochefoucauld will tell you of the idea which they have put into the heads of the grenadiers to go this night to Versailles; I urge you not to be disturbed, because I count on their confidence in me to destroy this project and I owe them the justice to say that they have counted on asking my permission. Many of them believed that a march would be very simple and that I would order it. I have entirely destroyed this fancy by four words which I have spoken to them; there only remains the inexhaustible resources of the cabalers. You ought to regard this circumstance as only a new indication of bad designs, but not in any manner as a real danger."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Malouet, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 304.

<sup>11</sup> Lafayette, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 33. Note.



This warning was exaggerated and the minister made use of it and sent d'Estaing to consult with members of the Assembly and to obtain the consent of the municipality of Versailles to ask for the regiment of Flanders. In the midst of these rumours and the danger of exciting the people of Paris, the officers of the Gardes du Corps gave a banquet to the officers of the Flanders regiment and the officers of the other three regiments at Versailles, including those of the National Guard. When the festivities were at their height, the queen was induced to enter the banquet-hall, accompanied by the king and the Dauphin. The Gardes du Corps, the grenadiers, all the soldiers, naked sword in hand, drank the health of the king, the queen, and the dauphin. The king and queen accepted these marks of affection, and then withdrew. "Soon the fête, which until then had only been animated by a gaiety, a little free, it is true, but still decent, changed into a complete orgy. The wines lavished with a truly royal munificence, excited everyone; the musicians played different pieces. They called for: O Richard, O my King, all the world abandons thee! of which the perfidious allusion could not at this moment be wanting in its application of the march of the Houllans. The trumpets sounded the charge; the staggering guests scaled the booths, presenting, at the same time, a disgusting and ridiculous spectacle. Many threw away their cockades, substituting white ones." <sup>12</sup>

The news of the banquet, carried to Paris, produced a tremendous excitement. On Sunday, October 4th, Loustallot cried out in the *Révolution de Paris*, "There must be a second revolutionary attack. Everything prepares for it—the spirit of the aristocracy has not left the Court. . . . You may be sure that the aristocracy has only thus raised its head because a crowd of old officers, chevaliers of Saint-Louis, noblemen, men already either compromised in the reforms or who are going to be, have signed a contract to join the gardes-du-corps; that this record contains already 30,000 names; that the project of the aristocratic chiefs is to carry off the King, to conduct him to the citadel of Metz, so as to be able to make war, in his name, on his people, and to make him powerless to hinder civil war, by casting himself into the arms of his subjects. These rumours are confirmed by want of provisions, which put the people out of power of succouring their King, and by the impudence with which the men of all ages and of all ranks wear the cockade of one colour; they have even dared to present themselves with these insulting tokens at the

<sup>12</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. I, p. 269.

review of a division of the national guard this Sunday morning, at the Champs-Élysées; a national guard without pay, M. Tassin, went from the ranks, and tore off one of these cockades, and, by way of reprisal, trampled it under foot."<sup>13</sup>

The revolutionary leaders needed no prodding to prepare for action. We are told that "Danton, on his side, sounded the tocsin at the Cordeliers. Sunday, this immortal district placarded a manifesto and even on this day would have become the advanced guard of the Parisian army, and have marched to Versailles, if M. de Crèvecoeur, its commander, had not restrained their ardour."

But everything had prepared for the explosion which occurred the next morning. The famine in the city, the jealousy excited in the National Guard, the rumours of the flight of the king, the hesitation of the king in accepting the Declaration of Rights and the Constitution, and finally the fête to the officers of the Flanders regiment and the trampling under foot of the national emblem, all combined to create conditions which made it easy for the Orleanist conspirators to carry out their plan. Had the court heeded the warning of Lafayette, they might have done much to allay the public suspicions instead of adding fuel to the flames of public indignation. Unfortunately they only served to increase the suspicions of the people and to unite them in the desire to bring the king to Paris. At the critical moment, Lafayette found himself opposed not only by the multitude, but also by the National Guard. No mere effervescence of the people could have been produced by a band of conspirators, unless the people had been deeply stirred by the fear of famine and the dread of civil war. It was the misfortune of the king that he never had any true idea of the force of public opinion and the strength of the people's desire for a liberal Constitution. The evils of the days of October 5th and 6th, at Versailles, were not the result of the march of the women or that of the National Guard; but must be attributed to the evil designs of a group of brigands, hired by the Duc d'Orleans and his party. Of his complicity there is not much doubt. He seized upon the turn of affairs and the discontent of the people to work his own nefarious designs which were either to dethrone the king or to induce him to flee, in the hope of becoming lieutenant-general of the kingdom. The timely arrival of Lafayette and the National Guard saved the situation and probably the life of the queen; but it was at a tremendous loss of prestige to the crown and to the cause of good government. The

<sup>13</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. III, p. 64.

invasion of the National Assembly by the women, the weakness of its president, Mounier, the doubtful conduct of Mirabeau lowered the prestige of the National Assembly and struck a blow at its authority from which it never fully recovered.

The demand that the king should come to Paris arose from the belief that only at Paris would he be delivered from the intrigues of the counter-revolutionary party and be free to co-operate with the popular party in the regeneration of France. The Revolution had attained such headway that it could be arrested or crushed only by civil war. The king had the choice either of resorting to civil war or of accepting the Revolution and marching along with the popular party to achieve the Constitution. If he had sincerely accepted the Constitution, the nation might have had a peaceful development under the monarchy.

It was inevitable after the publication of the Declaration of Rights that democracy should be the final outcome. Sooner or later the people would have demanded a share in the government, and the bourgeois régime, which the National Assembly was organising, would have been forced to yield to their demands. Prior to the Revolution the people had stood with bowed heads and bended knees before the nobility and the king; since the 14th of July, they had stood up with a new consciousness of their manhood and their rights as citizens. As Loustallot told them, "The great only appear great to us because we are kneeling: let us rise up." And as the people stood up, they saw a new vision and a new future in the sovereignty of the people and the equality of man. The passion for equality once awakened was destined to go forward; but in the very nature of the case, the time and manner of its final triumph would be retarded as the flood-tide of democracy encountered the currents flowing from the ebbing tides of feudalism and the monarchy.

The first effects of the events of October were to establish the bourgeois class in control of the government and with the king under its tutelage. Lafayette stood out as the leader of this class and the constitutionalists in the Assembly and controlled the one power which could maintain order at Paris. There were signs that the bourgeois class, now that they had secured the king, were tending towards reaction and desired to increase his power. Hence a new movement of the people was to be feared which would serve to drive forward the Revolution. It is the common misconception of historians to represent the king and the Assembly as being under the control of the democracy at this time. The royalist writers have established the legend that the

king's captivity began after the people brought him to Paris. This was to read into this period the facts of a later date. In a sense he was under the control of the Assembly. By the very nature of the king's situation, he could not leave Paris and separate himself from the Assembly, without becoming the centre around which would gather all the forces of reaction. To avoid civil war, the popular party was compelled to hold the king at Paris; freely, if he accepted the Constitution; by compulsion, if he was opposed to the Revolution. Lafayette, writing to Mounier who had left the Assembly with the second emigration, had said: "Devoted both from affection and duty to the cause of the people, I shall combat with equal ardour, aristocracy, despotism, and faction. I am conscious of the errors of the National Assembly; but it appears to me more dangerous, and it would be more criminal, to throw it into discredit. I dislike one individual possessing too much influence; but I am far more convinced than you believe, of the necessity of strengthening the executive power. I believe that the only way of avoiding civil war, and of doing good, considering the present circumstances, is to act with the National Assembly and with the king, united together in the capital."<sup>14</sup>

At this period it was the theory and belief that the king was well-intentioned and desired only the good of his people. It was only later, at the time of the flight to Varennes, that he revealed his true attitude towards the Revolution. Nevertheless its leaders could not disguise from themselves the fact that up to the present time, the king had only accepted the results of the Revolution under compulsion. This disinclination to freely co-operate with the Assembly forced the insurrection of July and the uprising in October. His hesitation in accepting the decree of the National Assembly and his sympathies with the reactionary party at his court kept alive the fears of the popular party. To this fear, too, may be attributed the direction which their legislation followed and the encroachments of the Assembly on the executive power. The king's weakness and vacillation of character made him a prey to the influences which were opposed to the Revolution. As the king would not lead the Revolution, he was forced to follow it. Moreover, this fear and mistrust of the popular party were not surprising. The issues at stake were enormous. The whole success of the Revolution depended upon the agreement of the king and the Assembly. Would the king sincerely work with the Assembly in making the Consti-

<sup>14</sup> Lafayette, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 418.

tution? That was the vital question of the time. The Assembly had always met the king's overtures for peace and an understanding with joyful acclamations and heralded him as the Restorer of French liberty; but after every concession, the impression remained that the king resented his new situation.

When the king consented to reside at Paris, the great fear of a counter-revolution and the dread of civil war were dissipated. Then the Assembly proceeded in its work of reorganising the government and completing the Constitution.

The violence, however, of the insurrection and the savageness of the mob at Versailles had alarmed the bourgeois class and created a new fear—the fear of the people. A reaction set in and the demand became insistent of organising the government in such a way as to exclude the masses of the people. A period of repression now began which established for more than a year the despotism of the bourgeoisie. Besides there is evidence that Lafayette and Mirabeau were desirous of strengthening the power of the executive. Remembering the insurrection of October, they desired a law which would contain the power of the people.

Mirabeau had proposed a martial law on the 14th of October, but was not sustained by the Assembly. It was significant that the Right, the royalist party, applauded him, a sign of the beginning of a tendency towards reaction. The question came to a head when a baker named François was killed by a mob on the 21st, accused of hiding bread from the people. The brutal murder under the eyes of the Assembly alarmed the forces of law and order and the commune urged the Assembly to pass a martial law. This was done the same day after a short debate, in which Robespierre stood forth in opposition. As this law had a marked effect in the succeeding year in maintaining the tranquillity of Paris its provisions are of some interest. The law was formulated in twelve articles and the first six articles give a good idea of its general nature.

"1. In the case where Public tranquillity will be in peril, the municipal officers of those places shall proceed, in virtue of the power which they have received from the commune, to declare that military force must be employed instantly to re-establish public order on pain of being held personally responsible.

"2. This declaration will be made by exposing at the principal window of the Town Hall, and in all the streets, a red flag, and at the same time, the municipal officers will require the chiefs of the national guard, the regular troops, and the patrols to lend a helping hand.

"3. At the mere signal of the flag, all mobs with or without arms become criminals and ought to be dispersed with force.

"4. The national guards, regular troops and patrols, will proceed to march immediately, commanded by their officers, preceded by a red flag, and accompanied by one municipal officer at least."

The sixth article is of interest as giving the manner of procedure.

"6. All persons gathered together in a crowd, failing to retire at this moment, three summons to retire tranquilly to their homes will be read to them in a loud voice by one or more of the municipal officers. The first summons will be expressed in these terms: warning is given that martial law is declared; that all riotous assemblies are criminal; all good citizens will be fired upon unless they retire. At the second and third summons, it will suffice to repeat these words: All good citizens will be fired upon unless they retire. The municipal officer will announce at each summons, that it is the first, or the second, or the last."<sup>15</sup> Some of the districts protested against the law, but the commune put down all opposition with a high hand and prosecuted the instigators of the criticisms in the districts. Even the press was cowed into silence. Only Loustallot dared to take any notice of the effect of this law. He wrote in the *Révolution de Paris*, "Monsieur, in grief and despair into which the martial law has plunged me, it is only to you that I dare address myself. . . . It is in vain they tell us that this law will give tranquillity to our citizens, liberty to the works of the National Assembly, and prevent bloody sacrifices; it only deprives us of popular insurrection, a fatal and disastrous resource, but the only one which has saved us up to the present. I am mistaken when I say popular insurrection, I ought to say, insurrection of the citizens, whom they wish to smother.

"The aristocrats, annoyed by the union which still exists between the citizen army and the people, wish to separate them, and perhaps more than that. Here are the consequences of this law; either a citizen, fearful of being forced to the point of slaughtering the people, will be disgusted with himself and will leave the regiment which has been disgraced; or several opportunities will arise to dip his hands in blood. My penetration fails on what may happen. • Yes, to proclaim martial law, before

<sup>15</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. III, p. 206.

a tribunal is established for the criminals of lèse-nation, is an impolitic act or a blow of vigorous despotism.”<sup>16</sup>

This law, however, strengthened the hand of Mayor Bailly and put a terrible power into the hands of Lafayette and was one reason why he was able to maintain order in Paris during the session of the Constituent Assembly.

Having established their power in the commune and the city, the Constitutionals now determined to curb the power of the districts by passing a law limiting the franchise to active citizens. This law divided the citizens into two classes, active and passive in accordance with a suggestion of Sieyès in the preceding August. The law decreed that an active citizen must be twenty-five years of age; that he must be domiciled in a canton for at least a year; or in the arrondissement of the primary assembly; and that he must pay a direct tax of the local value of three days of labour. Abbé Gregoire objected to this last proposal as tending to establish an aristocracy of wealth and he held that “to be a good citizen, to have sane judgment and a French heart was sufficient to be an elector or eligible to a primary assembly.”

Besides this law, the National Assembly decided that no one should be eligible to the Legislative Assembly, unless he paid a tax of a marc of silver. These laws while they gave a large measure of representation to the country districts, yet reduced the franchise in the cities, and especially in Paris to very narrow limits and placed the electoral power in the hands of some 14,000 voters of the bourgeois class out of a population of nearly a million. Moreover, it excluded entirely the workingmen and many of the professional class. Under these circumstances, it was not surprising that these laws provoked considerable opposition among the democratic leaders in the Assembly and the democratic press without. The ground of this opposition was that the law was a violation of the principles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Thus we find Duport, Robespierre, and other deputies protesting to the plans of the Constitutionals and justifying their opposition to the people on the principles of the Rights of Man. This party of the extreme Left soon became in the eyes of the people the party of principles as opposed to the party of the Constitution.

Robespierre said: “Nothing is less conformable to your Declaration of Rights, before which all privilege, all distinction, all exception, ought to disappear. The Constitution asserts that the

<sup>16</sup> “Histoire Parl.,” Vol. III, p. 222.

sovereignty resides in the people, in every individual of the people. . . . If not, it is not true that all men are equal in rights, that every man is a citizen. It is in consequence of your decrees, that each citizen has the right to consent to the law, and from that time the right of being an elector, or eligible without distinction of fortune.”<sup>17</sup>

Charles Lameth protested against the decree as establishing “an aristocracy of money” in place of the aristocracy of birth which the Assembly had destroyed. But in the press, Loustallot in the *Révolution de Paris* led the way in a vigorous public protest. “Behold then the aristocracy of wealth consecrated by a national decree. . . . In one word, they deprive a third of the nation of the power of representing the nation. . . . Before ten years, this article will restore us to the yoke of despotism, or it will cause a revolution which will have for its object the agrarian laws. What! the author of the *Contrat Social* would not have been eligible! Our most worthy citizens of the present time will no longer be eligible! That precious portion of citizens who owe their talents, their love for study, for profound investigations to a moderate fortune, will not be eligible!”<sup>18</sup>

On November 8th, Loustallot wrote an article on “Etat actuel de la Commune,” in which he said, “Citizens, how do matters stand with us? Is it true that we have fought for our country, that we have run to the ground despotism and aristocracy? Is it true that the Bastille exists no more? What has become of that liberty brilliant in its aurora? It is eclipsed before a new aristocracy, the aristocracy of our proxies.

“In a short time, the municipal power has overcome all barriers: already the Commune is nothing, and the municipality is everything; that is to say, our régime is aristocratic and not democratic and popular; from whence it follows that we are less free than under the royal despotism, for the worst of all despotisms is that of the many.”<sup>19</sup>

But the sections of Paris were not disposed to sit quietly and see the rights of the people infringed. That of the Cordeliers, whose president was Danton, passed a decree against the domination of the assembly of the three hundred at the Hôtel de Ville. The decree reads: “That the representatives of their district at the assembly of the Hôtel de Ville should take oath to oppose whatever the three hundred might do prejudicial to the

<sup>17</sup> “Histoire Parl.,” Vol. III, p. 213.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 324.



general rights of citizens, to oppose every civil or military institution which would not have the sanction of the majority of the districts; and finally to consider as revocable at will, whatever unfavourable decisions might be passed by the municipality.”<sup>20</sup>

In consequence of this decree the three representatives of the district of the Cordeliers gave in their resignations. New representatives were named who took the oath, but the assembly of the three hundred would not receive them and recalled the old members. Twenty-two other districts united with that of the Cordeliers in making this protest, but thirty-eight voted to sustain the assembly of the commune. These protests proved the strength of the democracy at Paris, and the decree of the district of the Cordeliers revealed that this democracy was an active force and commanded a respectable following among the sections. Here was contained the germ of opposition to the new order which developed later into the full-grown democratic party. For the time being, its opposition was futile, and the National Assembly and the commune proceeded with its laws and effected a bourgeois Constitution. From now onward, the patriot party divided into two separate streams; one adhered to the constitutional party in the Assembly and organised and controlled the government of the commune for the next two years; the other developed an increasing opposition to the commune, educated the workmen in their rights, and won over the people to the principles of democracy.

While the democratic leaders had protested against the decrees of the Assembly which limited the franchise and against the municipal administration which usurped the rights of the districts, the mass of the people acquiesced in the new régime and accepted the rule of the bourgeois class. For the time being, the radical elements of the city which came to the front later in the Revolution were held in abeyance. On December 14th, the Assembly passed the law on communal organisation and restricted further the rights of the people, placing the power in the hands of the active citizens. While there were constant rumours of counter-revolutionary plots which were used by the demagogues to excite the people, Paris remained quiet and the Assembly settled down to its work of completing the Constitution.

At the beginning of February, a new phase seemed to give promise of establishing the monarchy on a constitutional basis. This was the visit of the king to the National Assembly where he delivered an address in which he gave his adherence to the

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330.

Constitution. After calling the attention of the Assembly to the spread of the spirit of anarchy in the kingdom and the need of establishing the government on a basis of law and order, the king closed his address in these words: "Without doubt those who have abandoned great pecuniary privileges, those who will no longer form, as heretofore, a political order in the State, find themselves compelled to submit to sacrifices of which I know all the importance; but I am persuaded they will have sufficient generosity to seek an indemnity in the public advantages which hope offers in the establishment of the national assemblies.

"I would also have much loss to reckon, if, in the midst of the greatest interests of the State, I paused over my personal calculations; but I find a compensation which is sufficient, a full and entire compensation in the increasing happiness of the nation, and it is from the bottom of my heart that I here express this sentiment.

"I shall then defend, and I shall maintain Constitutional liberty whose principles have been consecrated by the general view, in agreement with mine. I shall do more, and in concert with the Queen who shares all my sentiments, I shall immediately prepare the mind and heart of my son for the new order of things which circumstances have introduced. I shall accustom him from his first years to be happy in the happiness of Frenchmen, and to always recognise, in spite of flattering tongues, that a wise Constitution will preserve him from dangers of inexperience, and that a just liberty adds a new price to the sentiments of love and fidelity of which the nation, for so many centuries, have given such touching proofs to its kings. I ought not to doubt that in achieving your work, you will surely apply yourselves with wisdom and candour to strengthen the executive power; without this necessary condition there can exist no durable order within, nor any respect without. No mistrust can reasonably remain with you; thus it is your duty, as citizens and as faithful representatives of the nation, to assure the well-being of the State and of public liberty, that stability which can only be derived from an active and tutelary authority. . . . And in occupying yourselves with liberty which you love and which I also love, you will not forget that disorder in administration, while introducing a confusion of forces, often degenerates, through other violences, into the most dangerous and alarming of all tyrannies." <sup>21</sup>

This address was received by the National Assembly with unusual transports of joy, and it voted immediately that every

<sup>21</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. IV, p. 440.

deputy take the oath to be faithful to the nation, the law, and the king. Each deputy came up to the tribune and took the oath. Then it was suggested that the spectators in the galleries take the oath also. This was done amid tremendous applause. Paris followed the lead of the Assembly and the mayor and the city council also took the oath. Paris was illuminated the same evening, and the people heralded this event as the beginning of a new era. The next day the students at the university elected to take the oath and even the districts followed their example. Unfortunately the effect of the king's speech in accepting the Constitution became a subject of suspicion by the actions of the court the same evening where the deputies were treated with marked disrespect. Lafayette wrote to the king protesting against the attitude of the courtiers and warning him of its danger. He urged the king to attach himself more openly to the constitutional party, but without any effect.

Mirabeau denounced the action of the king and the ministers as being merely a political move to checkmate the machinations of the Count of Provence, who was suspected of designs of seizing the regency through popular favour. Nevertheless the enthusiasm of the moment spread to all Frenchmen, and all over the land communes and officials vied with each other in taking the oath to the nation and to the king, and 'to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King.'

The enthusiasm, however, was short-lived and criticism soon took the place of sentiment. Men began to ask just what the king meant and if he had any ulterior designs. "On the one side, the patriots pretended that the address was patriotic; the impartial, or moderates in the Assembly who were led by Malouet, said that it was impartial; while the royalists looked upon his plan of conduct as an attempt to seek to reconstruct their loss of the power they regretted."

On the other extreme, the criticism was more open and Lousstalot gave expression to their views when he said: "Citizens, we have sworn without reflecting; we shall reflect after having sworn. . . . To swear to maintain a Constitution which is not yet made; to swear to maintain it, for the only reason that it is the work of the Assembly, accepted by the King, without regard for the general will, without acquiring the ratification of the people individually, is, it must be confessed, to make light of all the rules of good sense, of the first political rudiments, and of the national majesty. But if our representatives have lacked respect to us, the nation; if they have misconceived our sover-

eignty, it seems that they may be excused, because their object was to bind to the Revolution some of the deputies who were retarding their work. But as for us, nothing can excuse us from our lack of recognising that the will of 1200 deputies can, independently of us, become law and can lay the foundation of the Constitution. And that which is very strange, is that this oath, by which we have recognised that our will was not to be counted in the formation of our Constitution and of our laws, was not forced upon us; we have run towards slavery.”<sup>22</sup>

While this consistent attitude of democracy had little effect upon the course of events, it was otherwise with the suspicions raised as to the sincerity of the king. Whatever might have been his true opinion, the court and the royalist party had destroyed all the good effect, and the unity which for the moment had prevailed in the Assembly was broken and the strife of parties began again. The reforms of the Assembly had been too drastic and touched too many interests to give the hope that the Constitution could be accepted without strong opposition. The clergy had been thrown into opposition by the decree in November appropriating the wealth of the church for the service of the state; the old provincial governments had been antagonised by dividing France into eighty-three departments; and many communes had been stirred up to protest against the communal law of December 14th, which placed the local government in the hands of the active citizens, elected by the bourgeois class.

By pressure of public opinion, the National Assembly had been forced to pass many decrees which struck at vested interests and destroyed the immunity of the privileged classes. The royalist party, true to its destructive tactics, proposed through its leader Cazalès to fix a time when the term of the National Assembly would expire, saying, “It is important to consecrate the principle of the sovereignty of the nation, to demand a general adherence to the Constitution, and to discard the suspicions of the provinces on the sojourn of the Assembly and the King at a capital which has not their same interests. . . . He was interrupted here by a voice saying, ‘M. de Cazalès has forsworn his oath,’ and the Marquis de Menou rose and said, ‘I believe that the intentions of the previous speaker are pure; but it is not less true that his opinions tend to light a fire throughout the kingdom. I demand that he be called to order.’”<sup>23</sup>

It was the same purpose of the royalist party to bid against

<sup>22</sup> “*Histoire Parl.*,” Vol. IV, p. 447.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 452.

the Assembly by appealing to the sovereignty of the people and throwing discredit upon the popular party. "Undoubtedly," answered Chapelier, "all sovereignty resides in the people, but this principle has no application under the present circumstances. This would destroy the Constitution and liberty rather than renew the Assembly, even before the Constitution is completed; such is, in fact, the hope of those who wish to see the Constitution and liberty perish, and to see the distinction of orders spring up again, the prodigality of the public revenue, and the abuses which march in the train of despotism."

Maury, leader of the Right side, exclaimed, "Send these gentlemen to the Châtelet, or if you do not know them, say nothing about them."

"It is impossible," continued Chapelier, "that the Constitution should be the work of more than one Assembly. Besides, the ancient electors no longer exist; the bailiwicks are confounded in the departments; the orders are no longer separate. The clause of the limitation of power loses its value; it is therefore contrary to the principles of the Constitution that the deputies, whose authority is only affected by it, should not continue in this assembly; their oath commands them to remain here, and their public interest requires it."

To this speech, Abbé Maury replied: "We are environed by sophisms: for how long have we been a National Convention? They speak of the oath we have taken on the 20th of June, without dreaming that it cannot subvert that which we have taken to our constituents. . . . Yes, the Constitution is made, and I oppose myself to every decree which limits the rights of the people over their representatives. The founders of liberty ought to respect the liberty of the nation. It is above us, and by putting limits to the national authority we destroy our own."

This was a specious plea and was designed to excite the people against the Assembly as usurping the power of the nation. It was tactics of this kind which played into the hands of the democratic party. It was not Robespierre, but the royalist party which invoked the sovereign people and hoped by flattering them to enlist the people on its side.

Mirabeau, discerning the drift of the royalist policy, crushed them with this reply: "Whatever may be the powers we have exercised, our efforts, our labours; have legitimated them. The adherence of the nation has sanctified them. You recall the words of that great man of antiquity, who had neglected the legal forms to save his country. Summoned by a factious tribune,

to say if he had observed the laws; he answered, 'I swear that I have saved the country!' Gentlemen (turning to the deputies of the Commons) I swear that you have saved France!"<sup>24</sup>

This debate marked the beginning of a new attitude towards the Constitution and a new stress upon the principle of the sovereignty of the people. The tactics of the royalist party had forced the hand of the Constitutionalists, and in order to maintain their hold upon the people, they were compelled to introduce more radical legislation. In the bidding for popularity and for the applause of the tribunes, a schism was introduced into the popular party which divided its energies and broke the unanimity of its measures. From this disagreement, there emerged two divisions; the first led by the Lameths, Barnave, and Duport, who wished to conserve the doctrines and principles by which the Revolution had commenced and to march in advance of the people and push through their measures by their support, sought to win the popular applause by advocating principles of equality; the second party, composed of Lafayette, Sieyès, Chapelier, Mirabeau, and Mayor Bailly, wished to arrest the Revolution at this point, and consolidating the Constitution, but leaving to the king his present power. The revolutionary journals published an account of this period.

De Feydel wrote in the *Observateur* concerning Lafayette and his friends: "The first say everywhere that the others have abandoned the cause of the people and have become aristocrats. This accusation created trouble among the best members of the National Assembly. Wednesday evening (May 26th), at the committee of the Jacobins, where all assemble to prepare the discussions, a great number of good deputies, true friends of liberty and of the Constitution, proposed coming there no longer and forming an assembly apart from that of the Lameths, Duport, etc. To what can you attribute the cause? Is it the procedure of the Châtelet on the affair of October 6th? Is it the avarice of some of the members whom money has corrupted? Or better, is it only the different manner by which men of the same party see things? In any case, this event is the worst augury."<sup>25</sup>

Carra, in the *Annales Patriotiques*, gives this version: "For some time, the enemies of France and of liberty have circulated and printed libels that the most popular party of the National Assembly was interested in maintaining trouble at Paris, to raise themselves in favour by anarchy and by the terror of the

<sup>24</sup> Mignet, "Révolution Française," Vol. I, pp. 170, 172.

<sup>25</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VI, p. 159.

people, to the principal places; that is to say, the enemies of the Revolution attribute their views, their sentiments, and their baseness to true patriots. They say that M. Duport aspires to be mayor, and M. Charles Lameth to the commandant of the national guard." <sup>26</sup>

A heated controversy resulted between Lafayette and Lameth in which the latter repudiated the charge, but there were just grounds for the suspicion. At the same time, the ministry had formed a party in the Assembly which was endeavouring to influence the deputies to increase the power of the king, and it accused the extreme patriots with the ambition of driving the Revolution farther in the interest of their own schemes. Lafayette, Sieyès, and their friends, when they withdrew from the Jacobins, established a new club under the name of the Patriotic Society of 1789. At the opening of this society, they gave a great dinner with 180 places at the table and announced its purpose "to attend to everything which would contribute to the perfection of the social ideal." Sieyès presided and gave the official toasts—The Revolution, the nation, the law, and the king; he also proposed the toast—The best Constitution, the United States of America. This dinner made a great stir.

Moreover, one question which divided the opinions of the popular party was whether the right to declare war or make peace belonged to the nation or the king? Barnave spoke for the people and Mirabeau for the king. In the excitement of the debate, Mirabeau was accused of being the paid agent of the king and the newspapers came out with headlines, "Treason of Comte de Mirabeau." There was no evidence of this at the time, but it was only suspected. Nevertheless the suspicions were well founded, as later evidence has substantiated it. The honours of the debate belonged to Mirabeau and the Assembly compromised on the question. Barnave became the idol of the people, and Lameth, Pétion, d'Aiguillon, and Duport shared his popularity. It was reported when the question was decided that the Dauphin applauded the decree of Mirabeau. Robespierre was furious and, turning to the people who were applauding the patriots, he cried, "Well, gentlemen, why do you congratulate yourselves? The decree is detestable, let us leave this monkey to clap his hands at the window; he knows better than we what he is doing."

The division of the popular party soon became more apparent in the different policy which each pursued. The constitutionalists

<sup>26</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VI, p. 160.

and the club of '89 determined first to curb the democratic centres in Paris and destroy the districts which had become little more than democratic clubs. They brought before the Assembly a plan to reorganise the municipality of Paris which involved the abolition of the sixty districts, and formed forty-eight sections, with an equal number of electors, all of whom would be active citizens. This scheme abolished the district of the Cordeliers and incorporated it into the section of the Théâtre Français, and struck a decisive blow at the group under Danton which had controlled the district. All the democrats in the districts rose up in opposition to this scheme and every obstacle was put in the way of its attainment. Camille Desmoulins expressed the general feeling when he wrote, "All the republicans are dismayed by the suppression of our sixty districts after that meeting which yielded to the project of Desmeuniers. They regard this decree with as evil an eye as that of the marc of silver, and truly it is the greatest check that democracy has received. There is a great deal in favour of the districts; the facts ought to be judged before observations are made. What evils have they done? And is it not to them on the contrary that we owe the Revolution? The National Assembly alone, it must be confessed, has more often degenerated into a tumult, than the sixty districts all put together. That which speaks most in their favour, is that their majority have always voted for the general interest. Can as much be said for the National Assembly where the blacks have carried more than one brilliant victory?"

"O my very dear Cordeliers, adieu then to our little bell, to our chair and to our tribune, eloquent and full of illustrious orators. At this place there will only be a great urn, a jug where the active citizens who have never kept company with one another, will come to deposit their ballots and to distribute three coloured sashes to the most adroit intriguers. We were beginning to know each other fairly well: it will be soon a year since we have put ourselves to the proof."

M. Desmeuniers said, "Let us turn the sixty districts into 48 sections. They will no longer be able to distinguish the traitors from the citizens—perish even the name of district, this formidable name which would recall to the Parisians their glory, the taking of the Bastille, and the expedition of Versailles."<sup>27</sup>

But in the discussion in the Assembly over the plan of organisation, Abbé Maury had the imprudence to say that the districts would not obey the Assembly; this at once brought forth a protest.

<sup>27</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VI, p. 206.



from the districts led by the Cordeliers on the proposition of Chenier, and signed by Danton, president, that the district expressed its devotion to the National Assembly. The Assembly voted the new plan, but its effect was soon seen in the discussion and turmoil which began at Paris in the first days of July. The municipal elections were fixed for July 4th and the title of active citizen was earnestly discussed. It was said that in the faubourg of Saint-Antoine alone, it deprived more than 30,000 citizens of the vote who had homes in the district and allowed only 200 electors. Marat protested against this deprivation. He said, "There is no power under heaven, my dear compatriots, which is authorised to take from you your rights of citizens, ridiculously named rights of active citizens. The Declaration of the Rights of Man declares, Article IV, that all citizens are equally admissible to all posts of honour or places of employment, without other distinction than that of their virtue and their talents. All the more reason you are fitted to give your vote in the elections. The sole qualities which ought to characterise a citizen admissible in public affairs, is to have a fixed domicile, so that he is not accounted a foreigner, a passer-by, or vagabond; to be twenty-five years of age, so that he is presumed to be educated and reasonable; and to have good habits, so that he is not suspected of venality and corruption. As to the direct contribution which a vexatious decree demands from you, it has no obligation, since, on the contrary, this decree is later than the Declaration of the Rights of Man, by this reason this decree is purely regulative; whereas the Declaration of Rights is the immovable base of the Constitution. And since you have rendered numerous services to your country, and paid the onerous rights each day to the exchequer on your consumption, is not that sufficient?"

"Meet together then without hesitation; go in a body and have yourselves inscribed in your respective districts; there will not be found among the Commissioners any man so unreasonable as to contest your titles, if you have the courage not to allow them to count you for nothing." <sup>28</sup>

Loustallot pointed out that those who were ineligible to vote, by reason of the tax, would include three-quarters of the people of France, and he urged the Parisians to give an example to the nation of disregarding this regulation. On the 29th of June, the city assembly placarded a notice calling upon the citizens to convene in their districts, but the Cordeliers entered a protest and sent a deputation to the National Assembly to ask that the

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, p. 336.

date of the election might be changed from July 4th to August 1st. In this step it was supported by thirty-six other districts. After some discussion, a decree was passed fixing the time of the Paris elections for July 25th.

While the club of '89 was engaged in limiting the number of electors and destroying the districts, the leaders of the Jacobin Club prepared a measure which by its audacity staggered the Assembly. This was the proposal to abolish all titles of nobility. In order to further their plan the Lameths had secured the citizens of different countries then resident in Paris and had decked them out in the costumes of the various nations.

They hoped thus to appeal to the popular imagination and to enlist the people in the tribunes on their side. Baron Clootz was the head of the delegation and he made an impressive speech on the sovereignty of the people, and the "Ambassadors of the human race" were admitted to the honours of the sitting. Then a deputy arose and said "to-day is the tomb of vanity; I demand that hereditary noblesse be abolished and that every one be forbidden to take the rank of count, marquis, or baron."

"I support the motion of De Lambel," cried Charles de Lameth. "The titles which he asks you to destroy, wound equality which forms the base of our constitution; they are derived from the feudal system which you have destroyed—I support equally his second proposition. Hereditary noblesse shocks and wounds true liberty; there is no political equality, there is no emulation for virtue, where the citizens have no other honour than that which is attached to their duties which are confided to them, no other glory than that which they owe to their actions."

Some friends of Lafayette sent him word of the discussion in the Assembly, and he hastened to the hall and, ascending the tribune, said, "This motion is so necessary that I do not believe that it has need of being supported; but if there is need, I announce that I endorse it with all my heart." The Marquis de Noailles also spoke in favour of the motion, saying, "Let us destroy these vain titles, frivolous children of pride and vanity. We recognise no distinctions but those of virtue. Do they say Marquis Franklin, Count Washington, Baron Fox? They say Benjamin Franklin, Fox, Washington. These names have no need of qualification to be retained; they are never pronounced but with admiration."

Abbé Maury protested that the noblesse existed centuries before the feudal system and he made one remark which went to the root of the whole question, "The noblesse is constitutional; if

there is no more noblesse there is no more monarchy." <sup>29</sup> But the Assembly was in the hands of the popular party and they would brook no interference with their plans. The session became more and more tempestuous as the nobles tried to gain a hearing, but their voices were drowned in the cries "to the vote."

The decree was finally passed amid the shouts of the deputies and the applause of the spectators. "The Lameths," says Ferrières, "who did not doubt that this decree would bring them great popularity, insisted with energy that it be passed immediately. Lafayette and Mirabeau feared, if they opposed it, they would lose the popularity on which their power depended, and which the Lameths sought to take from them and did not dare to fight it, but believed it a duty to outbid the Lameths."

It was hoped that the king would veto the decree and Necker so advised him, but the other ministers opposed, in the hope that the abolition of titles would increase the enemies of the Revolution. The effect of the decree was to turn the noblesse of the provinces against the Constitution and to lead to a coalition of the nobility, the clergy, and members of Parlement who worked in opposition to the Constitution and the Revolution. All thoughts, however, were centred for a time on the Fête of the Federation of July 14th, the anniversary of the capture of the Bastille. This Fête was held with imposing ceremonies at the Champ de Mars with a review of 40,000 federates of the National Guards of France. The hero of the occasion was Lafayette riding up and down the arena upon his white charger; but the king, when he swore to accept the Constitution, kindled anew the loyalty of his people and drew to himself the affections of the multitude. The day was hailed as the end of the Revolution and party strife was forgotten for a moment in the ardour of patriotism. Men forgot the differences between active and passive citizens; they only remembered that they were brothers and Frenchmen. Lafayette as the chief of the staff of the Parisian militia and the representative of the delegates of army and navy and the National Guards of the provinces, mounted to the altar and swore to be faithful to the nation, the law, and the king. A discharge of forty pieces of cannon announced to France this solemn oath. Then the President of the National Assembly took the same oath and the deputies and the people responded with cries, "I swear it." Finally the king, standing before the altar of the country, pronounced in a loud voice, "I, King of the French, swear to employ the power which the Constitutional Act

<sup>29</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VI, p. 295.

has delegated to me, to maintain the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by me." And taking the Dauphin in his arms, he presented him to the people, saying, "Behold, my son, he is united with me in the same sentiments."<sup>30</sup>

At the close of this scene, the chief of the Bretons, bending his knee to the earth, presented his sword to Louis XVI: "Sire, I return to you the pure and sacred sword of the faithful Bretons; it will only be dyed with the blood of your enemies."

"This sword cannot be in better hands than in the hands of my dear Bretons," replied the king, raising up the chief of the Bretons. And returning to him the sword, he added, "I have never doubted their tenderness and their fidelity; assure them that I am father, brother and friend of all Frenchmen." The king was deeply moved and took the hand of the chief of the Bretons and embraced him. A mutual tenderness prolonged for some moments this touching scene; the chief of the Bretons, speaking first, said, "Sire, all Frenchmen, if I may judge by our hearts, cherish you and will cherish you, because you are a citizen King."<sup>31</sup>

It is said that Mirabeau, struck by the impression that the king made upon the people, exclaimed, "What can you make of a nation which can only cry, 'Vive le Roi'?"

<sup>30</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 153.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 177.

## CHAPTER V°

### THE TIDE OF DEMOCRACY TURNS TO FLOOD: THE FLIGHT TO VARENNES

WHEN the chief of the Bretons said to Louis XVI that "all Frenchmen will cherish you because you are a citizen King," he expressed the general sentiment of the mass of the French nation. Their devotion to the king at the Fête of the Federation arose from the belief that he had sincerely accepted the Constitution. This day seemed to mark the beginning of a new era in the history of the monarchy; the establishment of a new understanding between the king and the people. But appearances were deceptive. This tranquil spirit was only on the surface; deep down in the heart of the nation feelings and passions were surging, destined soon to burst forth in storm and tempest. In the present situation there could be no peace so long as the irreconcilable principles of monarchy and democracy contended for the mastery. There might have been a temporary compromise which would have endured for some years, if the king had been willing to lead the Revolution and accept in good faith the Constitution; but keen observers knew that the principles of the Declaration of Rights were destined ultimately to triumph in the state. The king was surrounded with forces and opinions which made a compromise impossible. The court and the queen were opposed to it and the ministers had no realisation of the necessity for such a step. Mirabeau, with a true genius to sense the political situation and to read the mind of the nation, secretly advised the king to lead the Revolution and to make concessions to public opinion; but Mirabeau's was a voice which had no influence in the inner circle in which the king moved. The court and the nobility only saw in the events of July the signs of reaction and the returning loyalty of the people for the king. They thought that the counter-revolution was already achieved, and they boasted openly of the coming change when the royal authority would be restored and the constitutional régime overthrown. Indeed, many signs pointed that way. The Paris elec-

tions had passed off quietly and Bailly had been re-elected mayor with an enormous majority, securing 12,000 votes out of a possible 14,000, in the face of a strong protest by the Club of the Cordeliers. Even the section of Danton, that of the Théâtre Français, had given Bailly a majority. The democratic protest had failed and the Moderates were returned to power and held command of Paris. Danton polled only 45 votes and the rest were scattering. The active citizens who were only 14,000 in a population of nearly a million, were united in sustaining the "bourgeois despotism"; but this situation contained elements of danger for the permanence of their rule. However, there were no signs, at the present moment, that a popular movement was to be feared. The wave of reaction was spreading and men seemed tired of the period of revolutionary excitement. The only disturbing element was the National Assembly which was torn with factions fighting for supremacy and disturbed by the conflicts growing out of the proposed decree on the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy." This measure had been under debate for the last three months and had caused tumultuous sessions, acrimonious debates, and fierce protests from the clergy and royalist party. In the last days of July, this decree was finally passed and sent to the king. He delayed giving his sanction, hoping that he could arrange an accommodation with the Pope; but the Assembly would brook no delay and under the insistence of the Jansenist, Camus, the Assembly urged the king to sanction the decree. He yielded to this demand and accepted the decree on the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, on August 2d. This decision was fraught with immense consequences for the Revolution as well as for the status of the clergy. It drove the majority of the clergy into opposition, destroyed whatever sympathy the king had had for the Revolution, created an antagonism between him and the National Assembly; and strengthened the forces of reaction. In sympathy with the nobility and clergy, the ministers favoured the forces of reaction, secretly sympathising with the increasing anarchy and the turbulence which was breaking out in many of the provinces. They hoped that the conditions of disorder would soon necessitate using the army which, under Marshal Bouillé and the royalist officers, was held secure for the service of the king. All these elements of the royalist party were elated by the spirit shown by the National Guards in July and counted on an easy victory. But they were oblivious to the new order of things and the new forces that had been unleashed by the Revolution. They had no conception of the new

spirit which animated the French nation, or the earnestness of the desire of the French people for a Constitution.

"The bishops and nobles," writes Ferrières, "believing strongly that the fermentation due to the new order of things could not last, hastened its coming with much impatience, in the hope of advancing the downfall and ruin of the monarchy and themselves. To this insane conduct, they joined an insulting disregard for the National Assembly and for the people who assisted at the meetings; they did not listen, laughing and speaking aloud, thus confirming the people in the unfavourable opinion which it had conceived for them; and instead of working to regain its confidence and esteem, they worked only to acquire its hate and disdain. All these foolish steps arose from the fact that the bishops and nobles could not persuade themselves that the Revolution had been an accomplished fact for a long time, in the opinion, and in the hearts of all Frenchmen. By the aid of these feeble dams, they imagined that they could restrain a torrent which increased each day. They augmented the flood which resulted in greater devastations by reason of their obstinate infatuation with the ancient régime—the basis of all their actions and of all their opposition, but which no one desired. By this awkward obstinacy, they forced the revolutionists to extend their system of revolution beyond even the end which they had proposed."<sup>1</sup>

Besides, the army had not escaped the contagion of the revolutionary ferment. The new democratic ideas were sapping the foundations of discipline and of authority and teaching the soldier to demand the abolition of the old restrictions which prevented him from rising to the grade of an officer. The new military law which the Assembly was considering not only contemplated raising the pay of the soldiers, but also restricting the arbitrary power of the officers. Afraid that the army might become an instrument in the hands of the aristocracy to bring on a counter-revolution, the popular party in the Assembly aimed to reduce its force; and the more ardent democrats inaugurated a campaign among the troops of the line to set the soldiers against their officers. The battalions which had taken part in the Fête of the Federation returned to their posts with new ideas of the service, and imbued with democratic ideas of the relations which should exist between the officers and men. The officers, nearly all nobles, enraged by the decree which abolished all titles of nobility, rebelled against the new order of things and sought in petty ways to provoke the anger of the soldiers and to make them

<sup>1</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 204.

disgusted with the Revolution. They sneered at the Declaration of Rights and spoke contemptuously of the uniform of the National Guards and made it a subject of jests. They insulted the citizen-soldiers in the streets of Nancy and treated the bourgeoisie with disdain. There was method in their madness. "The aristocrats," says Ferrières, "worked to augment the disorder and to achieve the disorganisation of the army, ordering the officers to use towards the soldiers sometimes a culpable indulgence, sometimes undue severity, in order that they might disgust them with the service and therefore lead to a general desertion before the establishment of the new military code."<sup>2</sup>

All these various influences rendered the army ripe for a mutiny, if a quarrel broke out between the officers and the soldiers. During July, there were constant disputes in the army over questions of pay and the soldiers accused the officers of misusing or squandering the regimental funds. Under these circumstances, the spirit of insubordination, and even insurrection, began to manifest itself among the troops of the line, stationed at Metz and at Nancy. On August 6th, the king, through the Minister of War, Latour du Pin, had asked the Assembly to give Marshal Bouillé more power to restore discipline in the army and the Assembly passed a decree forbidding deliberative assemblies of the regiments and appointing inspectors to verify the accounts for the last six years. But the question of the funds still continued to be the subject of dispute in the regiments.

Finally matters came to a head at Nancy, where three regiments, Château-Vieux, Mestre-de-Camp, and du Roi, refused to obey their officers and mutinied. Some of the soldiers had seized the army chest and claimed that it should be held by the regiment rather than by the officers. Upbraided by the commandant who demanded that the regiments deliver up the men who had been guilty of insubordination, the regiments refused to obey and broke out in insurrection. News was brought to Marshal Bouillé at Metz and he wrote to the Minister of War for authorisation to proceed against the rebels at Nancy. This mutiny furnished the opportunity to restore discipline in the army and overawe the radical elements, for which the royalists were waiting; and the regiment of the Château-Vieux which had refused to fire upon the people in July 1789, was marked for excessive punishment. Lafayette suggested to a deputy, Emmercy, that he propose to the Assembly a decree which would give to

<sup>2</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 180.



Marshal Bouillé the authority which he demanded. On August 16th, this decree was passed without discussion by the Assembly under the fear of the insurrection and with an imperfect knowledge of all the facts in the case. "The National Assembly, indignant over the continued insubordination by the regiments, du Roi, Mestre-de-Camp, and Château-Vieux, in disdain of the decree of August 6th, was convinced that those who escape their duties, to the prejudice of their oath, are the public enemies of true liberty and of the Constitution, that the violation by main force of the decrees, is a crime of lèse-Nation; that those who will not, in twenty-four hours, declare to their chiefs, the same by writing if the chiefs exact it, that they recognise their errors and repent of them, will be prosecuted and punished."

"When Loustallot heard of this decree, he wrote in the *Révolution de Paris*, "It is necessary that France, that Europe, that posterity know what discussion preceded this decree; behold"—and he then printed the decree. When the decree was brought to Nancy it was inscribed on the register by the officials of the municipality, but not published until the 20th.

The three regiments, at the instigation of the National Guard, voted to send a deputation to the National Assembly, asking it to overlook their disobedience and promising "obedience to our chiefs, and respect and submission to the decrees; we pray the national guard to protest in favour of our deputies arrested at Paris and to ask from the Assembly and from the King indulgence for them and for us." The eight deputies who had been previously sent to lay their case before the Assembly had been arrested and kept in prison and it was only on the 31st of August that the democrats in the Assembly succeeded in obtaining their release and a hearing before the Assembly as to the real cause of the insurrection. Then the Assembly learned for the first time that the officers were to blame as much as the men and that they had provoked the conflict. After a heated discussion, the Assembly finally agreed on the suggestion of Barnave to appoint two commissioners to go to Nancy and to investigate the trouble and "use means of conciliation and gentleness" to pacify the soldiers. But it was too late, and before the commissioners arrived Nancy had been the scene of a bloody struggle. The reason for this was that Marshal Bouillé, in sympathy with the counter-revolution and seeking the means to create civil war and thus save the monarchy, had tried to increase the irritation of the soldiers, rather than allay it. He had sent to Nancy, on the 25th, General de Malseigne, a noted aristocrat and a hard and

inflexible man, to treat with the regiments and to order the Château-Vieux to depart from Nancy. Malseigne called the regiments together in the barracks and spoke to them in a severe tone which irritated and wounded their pride. He refused to judge their case and gave them peremptory orders. Some of the more zealous soldiers wished to hold him prisoner and refused to allow him to leave. He drew his sword and attacked the grenadiers who guarded the gate. His sword being broken against a rifle, he seized that of the prévôt who accompanied him and wounded two of the soldiers; he then went out of the barracks and returned to the home of the commandant. Nancy was in commotion and the insurrection broke out afresh; the people were exasperated against Malseigne, charging him with provoking the disorder. Malseigne escaped to Lunéville and found there his old regiment of carbineers whom he armed to protect himself against the cavalry of the Mestre-du-camp, who had followed in pursuit. A skirmish took place in which the cavalry was defeated with some loss of life. Then the three regiments went out from Nancy to attack Malseigne and the carbineers; but meeting each other, the troops fraternised, and Malseigne was delivered again to the regiments of Nancy.

In the meantime, Bouillé had collected a force of 2,200 infantry, 1,400 cavalry, and some National Guards of Metz. As he was rapidly approaching Nancy, the municipality sent a deputation to him from the city and the troops, to beg him to arrest his march and withdraw his troops. He replied that any delay in his march might throw the nation into terrible agonies. A second deputation was sent to him and he received it surrounded by his troops. Interrupting the speaker of the deputation, he said, "I propose to pass into the city by the edge of my sword"; and turning to his troops, he said, "Are these your intentions?" and he was greeted with a cry of assent. "You have always been the father of the soldiers," Dumontet, the delegate from the municipality, replied. "Yes, of the submissive soldier, but the rebellious soldier I abandon, and if I recall him, it is to punish him according to the severity of the law."

The deputies, pleading fatigue, wrote a letter to the municipality, saying, "We have only time to send word of the intentions of M. de Bouillé; he demands that the garrison of Nancy leave the city, with MM. Malseigne and Denoué, at its head, that four men from each regiment, recognised leaders of this dissension, be sent at once to the Assembly, to be judged according to the severity of the law. If the regiments persist in maintaining their

attitude, twenty-four hours after the arrival of the deputies he will enter by force into Nancy, and he intends to put to the sword anyone found with arms." <sup>3</sup>

There was a division among the regiments of the policy to follow and the regiment du Roi retired to its barracks in accordance with the demand of Bouillé; the Mestre-de-Camp went out of the city and Denoue was given-up; but a portion of the Château-Vieux, with some of the National Guard, remained at the Stainville gate. Marshal Bouillé, to avoid bloodshed, had only to prevent the troops from coming into collision. But instead of this, he continued to advance; and a chance shot precipitated the conflict. The National Guard of Metz was in the advance and at first retired, then opened fire and a general fusillade began. In a short time, the gate was forced and fighting started in the streets of the city. It continued for three hours, from street to street and from house to house. In the struggle more than 2,000 men were killed, besides 800 women and children. Most of the troops employed by Bouillé were Swiss and a regiment of the Royal Germans. The three regiments surrendered and were sent to different encampments at a distance from Nancy. At a military tribunal held immediately after this, 28 were condemned to death and 41 of the soldiers sent to the galleys. A doctor of the Château-Vieux, who had dressed the wounded, was sent to the galleys for saying, "I do not see a rebel in a dying comrade." And the commissioners who arrived after this conflict from the Assembly, wrote back to Paris, "We have arrived, not in a city, but in a cemetery."

When the first rumour arrived in Paris, on September 2d, of the conflict at Nancy, a huge mob of forty thousand men and women gathered around the hall of the Assembly, shouting and demanding the dismissal of the ministers. It was believed that what they called "the Massacre of Nancy" was the beginning of a counter-revolutionary plot to restore the power of the monarchy by means of civil war. The king, however, had commended "the firmness and good conduct of M. de Bouillé and the fidelity of the National Guard and of the troops under his orders"; and the National Assembly also passed a resolution of commendation. At the Champ de Mars, the National Guard of Paris was drawn up in honour of the loyal soldiers who had lost their lives in the struggle; but it was said that it was a sober and sullen gathering.

The general feeling was expressed by the battalion of the

<sup>3</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de la Révolution," Vol. V, p. 35.

district of the Cordeliers, commanded by Danton, when they said, "Whatever opinion we have of the valour of all the National Guards who have had a part in this unhappy affair of Nancy, we cannot display any other sentiment than that of grief." And the sixth battalion was bold enough to pass a resolution in which they said, "Considering that in this affair, the General and the troops are not in the same position; that these last have fulfilled their duty in obeying, whatever fatal results this obedience has produced; that the General, on the contrary, is responsible to the country for the blood which has been shed, unless imperious necessity made a rigorous law for him; that far from being a hero, animated with patriotism, he may be only a man fond of blood and of carnage; that reward which he may deserve, after an impartial examination, may be rather one of punishments than of laurels." <sup>4</sup>

The massacre of Nancy had far-reaching effects upon the relations of the king and his ministers to the Assembly and the people. It was the spark that kindled anew the revolutionary fervour and set in motion again the democratic movement. The democratic press cried aloud against the danger of civil war which seemed imminent after the "massacre at Nancy"; and the indignation of the people against the perpetrators in this tragedy increased daily. Loustallot, just before he died, left this last testament of his grief over this event which shrouded for him the glory of the Revolution: "The blood of Frenchmen has flowed! The torch of civil war has been lighted! . . . These disastrous truths would dishearten our courage if the prospect of the dangers which threaten the country did not make it our duty to silence our profound grief. Frenchmen! What shall I say to you? What counsel shall I give you? What advice can you understand? In certain crises, everything is touched, everything is confounded; good and evil work almost by the same means.

"Oh, Justice and truth, under what heavy clouds do you appear before your sincere admirers! How can I save myself from the snares into which the Legislative body, the wise men of France, have fallen? How grasp the strange number of facts from the faithful reports, which all men should be told without reticence and disguise? How can I tell men with agony in my breast? How can I meditate with a broken heart? They are there, the corpses, which have strewn the streets of Nancy; and this cruel vision is only replaced by the revolting spectacle of

<sup>4</sup>"Histoire Parl.," Vol. VII, pp. 74, 5.

the sangfroid of those who have sent them to butchery, by the smile which enlivened the faces of the enemies of liberty."<sup>5</sup>

These burning words sank deeply into the hearts of the common people and their effect marked with blood the progress of the Revolution. A prophecy of coming events fell from the lips of the butcher, Legendre, a member of the club of the Cordeliers, who pronounced these words over the tomb of Loustallot, "Unfortunate friend of the Constitution, go into the other world since such is thy destiny. It is grief at the massacre of so many of our brothers at Nancy which has caused thy death; go, say to them that at the name of Bouillé, patriotism shudders; say to them that among a free people, nothing remains unpunished; say to them that sooner or later they will be avenged."<sup>6</sup>

The fermentation of the people continued to increase and the next day they gathered around the Tuilleries, demanding the dismissal of the ministry. The ministers, alarmed, fled from Paris. Latour du Pin escaped to St. Cloud and Necker went into the country. The next day, on the advice of Lafayette, Necker sent in his resignation and retired from the scene of the Revolution, regretted by few and despised by both the royalists and the Assembly. One year had been sufficient to cast him from the heights of popularity into the abyss of disdain and hatred. He was even detained by the people in passing through France and released only at the command of the National Assembly. He had wearied the Assembly with his complaints over the finances and angered them with his fruitless attempts at domination. Hated by the court and the nobility who laid at his door the evils of the Revolution, despised and hated by the people who held him responsible for the massacre of Nancy, he retired to his home at Geneva to write his reflections on the Revolution and his complaints against an ungrateful people. His retirement was secretly rejoiced in by the other ministers who felt that they had now a free hand to carry out their reactionary schemes. Unfortunately for the king, the ministers were blind to the trend of events and to the inner force of the Revolution, and imagined that it could be arrested or turned back by their clever schemes; but their plans only played into the hands of the democratic party and weakened the force of the moderate and constitutional party which was working to consolidate the Constitution and to strengthen the executive power of the king. For some time, the ministers had been working against the Revolution and striving

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

to thwart the plans of the National Assembly. This lack of co-operation between the ministers and the Assembly forced the constitutional party to move more to the Left and to seek support in the people. The leaders of the club of '89 tried to come to an understanding with the club of the Jacobins and to agree upon a concerted plan of action; but all these efforts were frustrated by the policy of the ministry and only resulted in bringing the people into the arena of public affairs.

Montgaillard, royalist historian, makes this direct charge, that Champion de Cicé, Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, favoured the party of the old régime and opposed the men of the new order and that he had encouraged the troubles at Nîmes and Montauban which ended in a small civil war; "that he often delayed for some months in sending out the decrees whose publication would have attached the people to the Constitution; that he allowed false decrees to circulate, edited in his department and counter-signed by the Minister of Justice; that he was cognisant of all the intentions of the counter-revolutionists of the court, since July 1789; finally, since his nomination to the Seals, Champion de Cicé showed very little equity as Chief-Justice, and gave no proof of any 'civicism' as a Frenchman."<sup>7</sup>

Towards the end of October, the troubles continued to increase throughout the kingdom and mutiny broke out among the soldiers and sailors at Brest and provoked a new fermentation and agitation at Paris. Baron de Menou, in the name of the committees of colonies, war, marine, and diplomacy, proposed that the Assembly decree a new administration for Brest and that "recognising that the mistrust of the people against the ministers occasions a lack of force in the government," the king be invited to dismiss his ministers as the greatest obstacle to the restoration of public order. This led to a long debate in which Cazalès distinguished himself in defending the right of the king to choose his own ministers.

He began by saying that he did not rise to defend the ministers who had betrayed the royal authority, and then he went on, "I would accuse your fugitive minister of finance, who, basely calculating his own security, has sacrificed the good which he could do to his own ambition. I accuse him of having provoked the Revolution (murmurs) without having prepared the means which would assure its success and prevent its dangers; I would accuse him of constantly dissimulating his conduct and his principles. I would accuse the minister of war, in time of greatest

<sup>7</sup> Montgaillard, "Histoire de la Révolution," Vol. II, p. 261.

danger, of giving leave to every officer who dared to ask for it; for not marking with infamy all those who left their posts in this dangerous time; I would accuse him of having thus allowed the destruction of public authority and fostered insubordination; I would accuse the minister of the interior of having allowed disobedience to the orders of the King; I would accuse them all of this amazing neutrality; I would accuse them of perfidious counsels.

"During the long convulsions which have agitated England, Strafford perished on the scaffold; but Europe admired his virtue, and his name has become the object of adoration by his fellow-citizens. Behold the example which faithful ministers ought to have followed: if they have not the courage to perish or sustain the shaking monarchy, they ought to flee and hide themselves. Strafford died. Ah! Is not this minister dead who cowardly abandoned France to the evils he had created? Has he not experienced the punishment of outliving himself, and leaving to history the memory of his shame? As to the servile companions of his works and his shame, present objects of your deliberations, cannot the verse of Tasse be applied, 'They go on still, but they are dead.'

"However, if the Assembly arrogates to itself the right of presenting to the King the desires of the people, the desires of the people are, in time, the orders for the King: the King, not yet having legal means to consult the people, will be obliged to obey. If by its influence, the Assembly excludes from the council the men called there by the confidence of the monarch, it will grow ere long to naming them, and we shall fall into the most monstrous tyranny. I shall cite the constant practice of England, of that people who knew the first art of liberty. You will not see in their history a single example of a minister dismissed by vote of Parliament.

"I will show you that many ministers have been taken from your bosom; that it was public opinion; that it is the opinion of this Assembly which had designated them to the King. (Murmurs increasing.) Do you not fear that this vacillation of opinions will pass as an intrigue of some of the members who wish to rise to the places of those whom you are asked to dismiss. (Murmurs continued.) Ah! Do not think that the decree which forbids the members of this Assembly to accept the places in the ministry, suffices to avoid this suspicion; they announce already to the public, that this decree will be abrogated; perhaps it would be a good thing (they murmur), and perhaps if this question was

discussed, the most zealous partisans of this decree would be the most active in demanding its reformation."<sup>8</sup>

This discussion continued through the next day and the decree was voted down by 403 votes to 340. When the vote was announced, the democratic press set up a hue and cry and told the people that their leaders were deceiving them and warned them of the plots to arrest the Revolution.

Fréron, in the *Orateur du peuple*, wrote, "The National Assembly has thus decided that the ministers should be maintained in their functions! Woe to the members, apostates from the cause of the people! Woe to Desmeuniers, Dupont, and even Camus! The insurrection cannot fail to be kindled in a more terrible manner. When they trample under feet the wishes of the people in such a derisive manner, they ought to expect that, roused by so great a denial of justice, nothing will hinder the people from taking arms and undertaking the work itself."

Camille Desmoulins exclaims, "In general the speeches of the patriots resembled too much the hair of '89, smooth and without powder. Where were you, Mirabeau, with your elegant strong head of hair! For somehow, in the great deliberations of the National Assembly, it is always the harangue of M. Barnave which is kept for the end, and the discussion is closed after him. I hope that the illustrious mayor of Grenoble will pardon me in saying that this time, at least, after his peroration, it was not the time, as they say, to pull away the ladder. Why did the two Lameths, whom we all love, cry: 'to the vote, to the vote!' When energetic Rewbell, eloquent Pétion demanded to speak, when herculean Mirabeau, arriving with his club, was going to crush in pieces all the pigmies in the blind alley!"<sup>9</sup>

Marat, too, inveighs against the "frightful malpractice of the Government," saying, "I have announced many times that the executive power pursues the disastrous system of the monopoly of grains. I have blamed the municipalities of the various provinces of being themselves the ministerial agents of this infamous monopoly, yet the National Assembly seems to wish to favour it, by launching thundering decrees against the poor people, who endeavour to oppose the enterprises of those scoundrels who wish to starve them; and I have denounced particularly, the municipalities of Niort, Toulouse, and Orleans, etc.; finally I have indicated the country of Gex and Nantes as the two principal points in France where our harvests are disposed of to foreigners."

<sup>8</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VII, p. 383.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 425.



Such utterances were not calculated to quiet the people, and the question of the dismissal of the ministers became the burning issue of the day. In the meanwhile, Danton and his followers in the old district of the Cordeliers had reorganised themselves into the club of the Rights of Man and of Citizen when the district was supplanted by the new section. At first, they met in a hall which was dark and disagreeable and proved to be inadequate to their needs. Then they demanded from the Hôtel de Ville that it allow them to meet in the old hall of the Cordeliers, threatening, if this was refused, to break open the doors. This threat secured the assent of the municipality and, from that time, this club resumed its old sway and became the centre of the democratic movement, leading in the new uprising of the people against the ministers. The democrats, becoming more and more alarmed with the progress of the counter-revolution, resolved to establish affiliated societies throughout the cities of France; and the Jacobins sent emissaries to establish the societies of the Friends of the Constitution. One of the first to be established was at Lyons whose object was to explain to the people the decrees of the Assembly and to instruct the poor citizens in their rights and duties—a society which marked the beginning of that democratic movement which finally destroyed the monarchy. The agitation over the dismissal of the ministers at Paris became the “tocsin sounding throughout the kingdom” and marked the first step in the ascendancy of the people and their control over the policy of the government. From this time the contests now passed from the forum to the streets. Each party began a campaign to win the popular favour and to organise clubs to influence public opinion. There was now a people’s party and a king’s party and the constitutional party began to see that if the Revolution was to be saved, they must rely more upon the people, and less upon the king. This new policy was also necessitated by the growing power of the sections of Paris and their will was now to make themselves felt in the Assembly. The section of Mauconseil led the way at the end of October, on the question of the dismissal of the ministers and succeeded in passing a vote of denunciation after a heated discussion and an acrimonious debate. It was supported in this action by fourteen other sections which sent a deputation to Mayor Bailly asking him to call a general meeting of the commune. Bailly hesitated to act and tried to turn them aside from their purpose, saying that the dismissal of the ministers was not an affair of the commune, but of the National Assembly. The sections, however, were not to be put off, and a

general call was issued by their leaders for all the forty-eight sections to send delegates to the archbishopric to consider the question, and to draw up an address to the National Assembly calling for the dismissal of the three ministers, of Justice, War, and the Interior. Danton was chosen secretary of this meeting and later was selected as the orator of the delegation to the National Assembly. Bailly was invited to head the delegation, but at first refused, and a great outcry was raised against him, charging him with being in sympathy with the ministers. Finally, after consultation with the Council at the Hôtel de Ville, he consented to lead the deputation, but Danton was to read the address. The deputation was received with howls of rage by the blacks and the royalists, and with transports of joy by the patriots and the galleries.

As this was the first time that Danton appeared before the general public and the National Assembly and as his address reveals very clearly the ideas of the democratic party and the principles by which they finally rose to power, this address is worth quoting in part.

M. Danton: "The National Assembly has felt itself obliged to decide, that there was no cause to deliberate on the proposition which has been made of declaring to the King that the ministers have lost the public confidence. The National Assembly, the friends of liberty, the whole of France, had reason to think that these ministers would not show their shame seeking to triumph by a negative decree. The whole of France had every reason to think that they would hand in their resignations which the National Assembly will always have the right to demand when it will judge it expedient." Abbé Maury, "Who has said that?" (There arise many murmurs; they demand that M. l'Abbé Maury be called to order and the orator continue.) Danton. "This Commune, composed of citizens who belong in some way to the eighty-three departments—(many members of the Right party: "That is not true!")—jealously desiring to fulfil in the name of all good Frenchmen—(many members of the Right, "There are no others")—the duties of the first sentinel to the Constitution, is in haste to express a demand which is dear to all the enemies of despotism, a demand which should be heard by all the parties of the great family of the State, if the sections of the empire could be united as promptly as those of Paris. This vote is the prompt removal, the immediate removal of the ministers." Maury. "I request permission to speak." Danton. "One of them, M. Champion, is accused and already convicted of altering

the text of many of the decrees—(many members of the Right party, "That is not true!"—of delaying the execution and sending of decrees which are of importance to the public tranquillity, and notably of that one, which gave information against the counter-revolutionists of Montauban—(many voices of the Right, "There aren't any")—of having chosen for commissioners of the King a great number of individuals, declared enemies of the new order of things, and notably for the tribunal of the district of Moissac, the procurator-syndic of the commune of Montauban, accused of being one of the most ardent abettors of the disturbances in that city"—(many members of the Right demand that the orator of the deputation be called to order.) The President decides that the reading shall continue.

Danton. "Finally, of printing for these same commissioners of the King a long order in which the decrees are commented upon and the powers of these commissioners extended beyond the limits prescribed by the Constitution.

"Another one, M. Guignard (Saint-Priest) who knows no other patriotism than that which he has imbibed from drawing-room politics, is judicially accused of having dared to menace, with his famous Damascus steel, patriotic heads. The third, M. Latour du Pin, incapable of any action of his own, but an enemy of the Revolution, because he took his pedigree and his vanity for true nobleness—(there arise many murmurs from both parties in the hall)—less culpable than another, because his clumsiness kept him from being dangerous, has ungarrisoned the frontiers, oppressed, dishonoured a great number of soldiers and under-officers, revived the lettres de cachet, and detained in prison an under-officer against whom there was neither judgment, instruction, or accusation.

"It is time, that under the empire of liberty, these three ministers should be allowed no longer to take up arms against the people themselves through the indulgence of the representatives of the people."<sup>10</sup>

In the name of the sections of Paris, Danton demanded that the Assembly declare to the king that the ministers are unworthy of public confidence and ask for their dismissal; that a High Court of Justice be organised to try men for the crime of lèse-nation, and that the ministers be sent before this court, that they be detained in the kingdom, until they have rendered an account of their administration.

At the close of this address, the deputation was given the

<sup>10</sup> "Discours de Danton," edited by André Fribourg, Paris, 1910, p. 67.

honours of the sitting and the Assembly, without discussion, passed to the order of the day. But the protest of the commune had not been in vain; for the ministers, frightened by the disapproval of the public, in a few days resigned.

Danton, who had been passed by in the elections of the preceding July, now came to the front on the crest of the wave of the rising tide of democracy. And we shall see his influence increase and his power over men and the people grow with the advance of this movement. A few days after this address in the Assembly, he was chosen commander of the battalion of his district, Théâtre Français. This deputation of the commune was not the outcome of an insurrection, but it had all the force of one. It marked the advent of the commune of Paris as a political force, a force which grew with the advance of the Revolution and gained in influence as the Assembly was forced more and more to rely, in its conflict with the court, upon public opinion. The effect of the counter-revolutionary movement was to weaken the power of the king and to force him to change his ministers under the pressure of public opinion in Paris.

The new ministers were adherents of the constitutional party and followers of Lafayette and Mirabeau. Duportail succeeded to the ministry of war and Duport du Tertre, a modest and simple man, who lived quietly in a third étage at Paris and was respected for his integrity, became the chief-justice in succession to Champion de Cicé. Saint-Priest still remained at the ministry of the Interior and Montmorin at that of Foreign Affairs; and Dufresne took the post of Necker. While these changes were, in general, satisfactory, there was some discontent over the retention of Saint-Priest.

The new ministry entered on its duties at the time when Mirabeau came to power and exercised his sway over both the Assembly and the people. He was one of the great statesmen of his age and his leadership in the Assembly had made him famous throughout France and Europe. If he had been guided by the highest motives and had been faithful to the popular cause, he might have changed the direction of the Revolution; but, unfortunately, his energies were directed to arrest the Revolution and turn back its forces in the direction of restoring the power of the king. The Revolution had, at this period, advanced so far and the ideas of liberty and democracy had made such headway among the people, that they could only be contained and directed if the king had united with Mirabeau in a sincere desire to establish a constitutional government. But such a policy was

impossible under the prejudices of the court, the weakness of the king, and the domination of the queen. They were prepared to use Mirabeau, to utilise his popularity, to pay him handsomely for his support, but to work secretly against his plan to establish a constitutional government even though it conceded large powers to the king. Mirabeau's plan was to increase the enemies of the Revolution by an excess of evils; for this end, he advocated the decree compelling the non-juring clergy to take the oath to the Constitution and the excessive issue of assignats leading to bankruptcy, which would serve to arouse the spirit of resistance and lead to civil war. He proposed to remove the king to one of the cities of the provinces, like Lyons or Rouen; summon the Assembly to follow the king, and then dissolve the Assembly and make a new appeal to the people.

Moreover, while secretly serving the king and planning for his flight from Paris, Mirabeau took care to conserve his popularity. The measures which he proposed seemed to be in harmony with the popular desires. Supported by his popularity in the clubs and in the sections, he now dominated the Assembly and the political situation by his genius and oratory. It was said by Dumont that "he was the ruler of the Assembly who ruled all. At the Assembly, the eyes of every one were directed in search of him in the midst of his colleagues, each was happy at having heard him speak, and his most familiar expressions were preserved as apothegms." Not only had he maintained his influence in the Assembly, but he had become more powerful than ever. He had formed no special party, but exercised a successive influence over both parties, and was treated as a great power. The Jacobins who, at this period, formed a state within a state, and who sometimes successfully competed with the National Assembly itself, were alternately governed by the Lameths, Robespierre, and Pétion; but whenever Mirabeau condescended to appear in their tribune, he always bent them to his will. He seldom, however, went among them; for his contempt of this dangerous faction was equalled only by his jealousy of their growing influence."<sup>11</sup>

But his policy was an impossible one. He could not serve the ends of the court and at the same time hold to the principles of the people. Sooner or later, the conflict between the contrary ideas would force his hand and he would lose his influence with the people. He died before his whole plan was revealed to the people; but before his death, he had shown enough of

<sup>11</sup> Dumont, "Recollections," pp. 205, 7.

his royalist affiliations to discredit his influence at the Jacobin Club.

In November, he was elected President of the Jacobin Club; but his relations with the court were soon suspected and some twenty persons were more or less in the secret. His break with the Left came when he made his great speech on the law of emigration at the end of January, 1791. Turning to the Left who had annoyed him by their interruptions, he exclaimed, "Silence, aux trente voix!" On the same day, the 31st of January, he was elected president of the Assembly by a combination of the court party and the moderates in the Assembly. He had too many secret enemies among the democrats to be elected by a majority consisting only of their votes, and while other distinguished men had been honoured, he had for a long time been kept out of the presidency. In this office he attained the height of his power and won universal approbation by the clearness of his proceedings, "the precisions of his observations, his answers to the several deputations at the bar, and his impartiality in dealing with the deputies." But in the address of January 31st he had shown his hand and he went the same night to the Jacobin Club to defend his policy. There he was assailed by the democratic leaders and realised that his influence was gone. He died at the height of his fame, universally lamented by the court because he was the one man whom they hoped could control the Assembly in its interest; mourned by the people because he seemed to them to be the champion of their rights.

Only later were the people to learn that the great tribune had betrayed them. His policy left everything in confusion and the conflict for ascendancy by the parties in the Assembly became fiercer than ever. The court still adhered to his plan for the king's flight, but without Mirabeau's guiding genius to direct it in a way to lead to its success. The power in the Assembly drifted more and more to the Left and the forces of democracy began to exercise a larger influence.

The time of Mirabeau's ascendancy was the critical period in the history of the Revolution. It was the time when the people came to exercise a greater influence upon men and events; when the parties struggled for power and outbid each other in the desire to gain popularity; when the clubs were formed to influence public opinion; and when the king and the court and the ministers destroyed the last public respect for royalty by their open sympathies with the plans of the counter-revolutionists. The king's good intentions were no longer spoken about; for the

people suspected that he was opposed to the Constitution. The queen was daily subjected to insults, and, in her bitterness of spirit, she turned to any scheme which had the promise of relieving her from her tragic situation. It was in September that the king secretly planned with Marshal Bouillé the scheme of his flight; and it was in December, after the decree of the civil constitution of the clergy, that he wrote his letter to the King of Prussia. "I have learned from M. de Moustier how great an interest your majesty has displayed, not only for my person but for the welfare of my kingdom, and your majesty's determination to prove this interest, whenever it can be for the good of my people, has deeply touched me; and I confidently claim the fulfilment of it, at this moment, when, in spite of my having accepted the new constitution, the factious portion of my subjects openly manifest their intention of destroying the remainder of the monarchy. I have addressed the emperor and the empress of Russia, and the kings of Spain and Sweden, and I have suggested to them the idea of a congress of the principal powers of Europe, *supported by an armed force*, as the best measure to check the progress of faction here, to afford the means of establishing a better order of things, and preventing the evil that devours this country from seizing on the other states of Europe. I trust that your majesty will approve of my ideas, and maintain the strictest secrecy respecting the step I have taken in this matter, as you will feel that the critical position in which I am placed at present compels me to use the greatest circumspection. It is for this reason that the Baron de Breteuil is alone acquainted with my secret, and through him your majesty can transmit to me whatever you may think fit."<sup>12</sup>

After this letter of the king, it was clear that no plans of Lafayette based upon the establishment of the constitutional régime could hope for any success; and even those of Mirabeau had been adopted by the court only as a means of getting out of Paris and into touch with the foreign powers. When one of the friends of Mirabeau once suggested to him the difficulty of managing the king and the court, after the escape from Paris, "they have promised me everything," he said. "And if they should not keep their word—if they do not keep their word, I will soon turn them into a republic."

In these words Mirabeau discerned the force of the Revolution and saw that it could be arrested only by establishing the Con-

<sup>12</sup> Lamartine, "History of the Girondists," Vol. I, p. 188. "Histoire Parl.," Vol. VIII.

stitution and rallying around the king and the Constitution all the enthusiasm of Frenchmen for this charter of liberty. But a king who escaped from Paris to call into France foreign troops to restore his throne would have found himself faced by a nation in arms. It was the strength of the democratic leaders and the prevision of Robespierre that they early foresaw, after 1790, that there was no hope of reconciling the antagonistic principles of democracy and monarchy, except on the principle of the subordination of the king to the people; that the Revolution would go on because they foresaw that the king would not accept this position, and that, sooner or later, he would put himself in direct antagonism to the people. In spite of the efforts of Mirabeau, the democrats were determined that the Revolution should not be arrested or checked in its course; and their voices and opinions were more and more determining the will of the Assembly, because they had the ear of the people and moulded their opinions. However much Mirabeau, or even Lafayette, might wish to conserve the royal power, the trend of events was against them. Their power depended in the last analysis upon their popularity, and in the bid for the suffrages of the people the men who stood forth as the champions of the Rights of Man were bound to outbid them and triumph over them. There is revealed here the working of those principles which everywhere has marked the expansion of democracy: the competition for popularity and the strife of parties to win the masses to their side has always resulted in conceding to the popular demands. With every concession there was a fresh demand, and the leaders of the democratic movement could keep in power only by moving in advance of the people.

Apart from the flight of the king, this movement was bound to go on, and we find, even up to the 21st of June, that democratic ideas were making their way among the people, and that Robespierre and Pétion, who stand out for the rights of the people, were supplanting the Lameths and Duport at the Jacobin Club. Lafayette's popularity was declining and the constitutional party was losing ground in face of the popular demand to extend the suffrage. The flight of the king only hastened this movement and destroyed the reverence for royalty in the minds of millions of Frenchmen. Lafayette had said, the year before, that a republic in France was impossible for thirty years; but the Revolution had so far accelerated the movement towards democracy, that even if the king had accepted the Constitution, and consented to reign, but not to govern, he would have been



reduced to accept an assembly based upon the suffrages of the nation. In spite of this trend towards democracy, the masses of the people were still loyal to the king; but it must be a king who would be loyal to the people and retire behind the law and the Constitution.

It was the tragedy of the situation that the king could not understand this and that his advisers and the policy of Mirabeau, together with the hostility of the refractory priests, had placed him in permanent opposition to the Constitution and to the people. Since the day of the poniards—the day when the mob went to destroy the donjon of Vincennes and the courtiers were found armed with poniards in the palace of the Tuileries—a great fear had seized the people, the fear of the king's flight; and the horizon was darkened for the Parisians with the clouds of civil war. The king was known to keep at the Tuileries refractory priests who administered the communion to him and the report was circulated that he was planning with the permission of Lafayette and the municipality to go to Saint-Cloud for Easter. The rumours which were circulated of the impending flight excited the people. Every incident served to kindle fresh alarms. The announcement that the aunts of the king desired to leave Paris and go to Rome was seen as a step preparatory to the departure of the king, and their detention from the journey was removed only by the influence of Mirabeau. A rumour that the Count of Provence was about to leave was sufficient to bring a mob to his house and it departed only after securing a promise that he would stay in Paris with the king. The people were not deceived in their suspicions of the intentions of the court, and towards the end of March, rumours circulated of the gaiety of the court, and the talk of the journey to St. Cloud at Easter. On March 20th, Marat came out in his paper warning them of the impending departure and its terrible consequences for the people. He said: "The Court, the ministers, the proscribed priests, the general, the staff, and the municipality only seek to incite the people to insurrection in order that they may have a pretext to declare martial law, and slaughter good citizens. And that time is not far off. An enemy army of eighty thousand men are camped on our frontiers, almost entirely disgarrisoned of French troops, and the few foreign regiments who are stationed there have orders to allow passage to the Austrians. The National Guards of the departments, who could dispute their entrance into the kingdom, are without arms, without munitions, and subjected to the directories composed of supporters of the

ancient régime. At the moment when the royal family will be carried away, the enemy will advance on Paris, where the National Assembly and the traitorous municipality will proclaim submission to the monarch. A part of the National Guards, the Alguazil cavalry, the Chasseurs des Barrières, the Gardes des Ports, and forty thousand brigands hidden within our walls, will join the conspirators to slaughter the people; and the friends of liberty without arms, without money will be forced to submit to slavery to escape death. . . . Citizens, I repeat it to you. It is the end of liberty, it is the end of our country, if we suffer the royal family to leave the Tuileries and go to Saint Cloud."<sup>13</sup>

Such an appeal was not lost upon the people, and they kept a careful watch around the palace. On the 18th of April, when the king attempted to leave the Tuileries for Saint-Cloud, an immense crowd immediately gathered, and though Lafayette was there with a battalion of the National Guard, they obstructed the passage of the king. Lafayette protested, and, finding his efforts unavailing, he returned to the Hôtel de Ville and to the Council of the department to obtain power to employ force. Danton, who was a member of the departmental council, immediately reported this step to the other battalions of the guard and went in haste with his own battalion of the Théâtre Français to the Tuileries. When Lafayette returned and ordered the National Guards to clear a passage for the king, they refused to obey him. He then ordered the cavalry to charge the people, sword in hand; but they refused to draw the sabre. They advanced, but stopped before the National Guards.

Lafayette was powerless, and the king who had remained in his carriage with the queen and the royal family for an hour and a half, subjected to the taunts and insults of the people, decided to return to the palace. A grenadier, turning to the king, had said, "We love you, Sire, but you alone." The queen wept. Lafayette went to the Hôtel de Ville and resigned his command and consented to retake it only after he had been earnestly solicited by the guards and the municipality; and then only after they had sworn to an ironclad oath of obedience which many of the patriots refused to give, thus destroying the ascendancy of Lafayette and decreasing his popularity with the people. As the king returned to the palace, the queen, turning to those about her, said: "You must admit now, gentlemen, that we are not free." The whole affair was part of the scheme for the flight, and the people, with a sure instinct, recognised

<sup>13</sup> Jaurés, Vol. II, p. 333.

that the departure for Saint-Cloud would have only been the signal for civil war. As usual, the centre of opposition was Danton and the club of the Cordeliers. A few days before the Cordeliers had issued a decree in which we read, "That the chief public functionary of the State allows and permits refractory priests to retire to his house and to exercise, to the horror of Frenchmen, the public functions which they are forbidden to do by law; that he has himself received the pascal communion and heard mass by one of the refractory priests; the society decrees, that it denounces to the representatives of the nation this chief public functionary, this principal subject of the law, as refractory to the constitutional laws which he has sworn to maintain and whose duties prescribe him to assure the execution; and as authorising disobedience and revolt, and preparing those factions for the French nation, which the enemies of the rights of man wish to excite against the Constitution."<sup>14</sup>

Possibly alarmed by this attitude of a section of the people, the king came before the Assembly the next day and said that it was important for the full liberty of his sanction and of his acceptance that he should make his projected journey and persist in his intention of going to Saint-Cloud. "I have accepted and sanctioned the Constitution of which the civil constitution of the clergy forms a part, and I shall maintain it with all my power." This statement was received by the Assembly with great applause, but it was significant that the Right side was silent. They knew too well the insincerity of the king and that he had made the declaration only to mask his preparations for flight. Not content with his pervidious step, the king on April 23d, through the Foreign Minister, Montmorin, addressed a letter to the foreign powers in which the principal passage was: "The sovereign nation has no more than a citizen's equal in rights, no despot but the law, no spokesmen but the public functionaries, and the King is the head of these functionaries; such is the French Revolution. . . . After having accepted and sanctioned all the laws, he has neglected no means to execute them; since the month of February of last year, he has, in the National Assembly, promised to maintain them; he has taken the oath in the midst of the universal federation of the kingdom; honoured with the title of restorer of French liberty, he will no longer transmit a crown to his son, he will transmit to him a constitutional monarchy. The enemies of the Constitution do not cease to repeat that the King is not happy, as if there could

<sup>14</sup> Ferrières, "Mémoires," Vol. II, p. 353.

exist for a King any other happiness than that of his people; they say that his authority is destroyed, as if authority founded upon force was not less powerful and certain than authority of law; finally, that the King is not free: atrocious calumny, if they suppose that his will could be forced; absurd, if they take for lack of liberty the consent which his Majesty has expressed many times to remain in the midst of the citizens of Paris: consent which he owes to their patriotism, even to their fears, and above all to their love."<sup>15</sup>

The reading of this letter in the Assembly excited transports of joy by the party of the Left and also by the tribunes, and it was interrupted many times with cries of "Vive le Roi." But Montmorin knew that it rested upon falsehoods and was drawn up to deceive the people. He had refused for some time to put his signature to the document, but finally consented. And he wrote to the Comte de la Marck, "It is really too much to speak of the liberty of the King, on the morrow of the day when he came and said himself to the Assembly that he had been hindered from departing but that he persisted in his design."

Nothing could be expected from a king who could stoop to such falsehoods and who, as events later revealed, had marked Lafayette and the constitutional leaders for destruction. But the strange thing was that he did deceive the Assembly, and not the people.

Meanwhile the democratic movement was gaining adherents every day, opinion was gradually changing in Paris, and many moderates were becoming more sympathetic with the democratic principle. The bourgeois Constitution was awakening discontent among the people and the influence of the extreme men of the Left was increasing. Robespierre was elected Public Accuser of the Courts of Judicature; Pétion was considered as a possible mayor of Paris, and Danton had been elected by his district to the council of the department. Robespierre crystallised the growing sentiment in favour of democracy in an address which he prepared for the Assembly, but did not deliver. It was printed, and created an immense sensation. He advocated a decree in favour of universal suffrage and championed the cause of the poor man who was deprived of his rights because he had no property. He wrote, "I call to witness all those whom the instinct of a noble and sensitive mind has moulded, and made worthy to know and love equality, that in general, there is no one so good and so just as the people, so long as they are

<sup>15</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. IX, pp. 413-16.

not irritated by excessive oppression; that they are grateful for the slightest regard shown them, for the least good one does them, even for the evils one refrains from doing; that it is among them that one finds, under a gross exterior, candid and upright souls, and a good sense and energy that one would search for long and vainly in the class that despises them. The people want only what is necessary; they wish only justice and peace. The rich claim everything; they want to invade everything, dominate everything. Abuse is the occupation, the province of the rich; they are the scourges of the people. The interest of the people is the general interest; that of the rich is the interest of the individual. And you wish to make the people impotent, the rich omnipotent.”<sup>16</sup> This is the dominant thought of Robespierre, and reveals the path by which he had chosen to march to power, the path of a war of classes, the forerunner of the Terror.

The address was read at the Cordeliers and the club voted that it should be printed and placarded. Its publication made Robespierre the leader of the democracy and the demagogue of the proletariat. On April 27th, he spoke at the Assembly against the property qualification of the suffrage, and again on May 28th, at a debate on the convocation of the Legislative Assembly, he spoke against the tax of the marc of silver as necessary for eligibility for the election to the Assembly. On May 16th, Robespierre had proposed that the members of the present assembly could not be re-elected to the first Legislative Assembly. This produced a protracted debate, and the Lameths, Barnave, and Duport discerned that Robespierre, who was daily supplanting them at the Jacobin Club, wished to exclude them from public life.

It was at this time that Duport made a great speech in which he warned the Assembly of the dangers to which liberty was exposed and prophesied the excesses which would come from too rapid an extension of the suffrage. He said: “Do you not see this crowd of men without intelligence, already repeating what has been suggested to them, that the first legislature will be constituent, and that it will make a constitution more conformable to the Declaration of Rights? When these ideas will have spread further, there will no longer be time to prevent the danger; it will have come. Then popular opinion, which has seconded your labours, will turn against them. . . . “Do not believe that the ideas of liberty and of equality will ever go backwards; on

<sup>16</sup> Aulard, “Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française,” Vol. I, p. 240.

the contrary, they will extend by their nature, and be propagated more and more. Behold the great secret—you can enchain them in happy and strong combinations which will retain them and conserve them. It is necessary to attach them to a just and firm government; without that, they will continue to fall; they will descend to a level, always dissolving, even to the division of the land. . . . The same men, who maintained, at the time of the marc of silver, which passed against my judgment, that the sovereignty of the people was being injured, they, who proclaimed that word so loudly every day, have deprived it of that same sovereignty. . . . Leave to the people the free exercise of a faculty of which they are at once the judge and the object. Do not deprive them of the right to influence their deputies and of the power to remove them or to continue to give them their confidence. . . . If the people can only demur, but not assent, there is no true liberty. Rousseau has said, that in a representative government, the people were only free for a day; with the constitution which has been proposed to you, they will be only free for a moment.”<sup>17</sup>

But in spite of this protest, the National Assembly passed the decree suggested by Robespierre and this was the result of a combination of the two parties of the extremes, the Right and the extreme Left. Again the Royalist Party resorted to their dangerous tactics of sustaining resolutions which would push the Revolution to excess. Dearly were they to pay later for their tactics, and the downfall of the monarchy and the Terror which followed may justly be laid to their door.

At the beginning of June, there was a great agitation for the revision of the Constitution in the clubs and in the department of Paris. The club of the Cordeliers took the lead, declaring that “it was important not to be governed long by laws which are incoherent or destructive in respect to the Declaration of Rights, of which the logical consequence is equality of suffrage.” Later other societies to the number of thirteen followed their example and sent a petition to the National Assembly on June 20th: “You have declared that the law can only be the expression of the general will, and the majority is composed of citizens who are strangely called passive. If you do not name the day of the universal sanction of the law by the whole mass of the citizens; if you do not put an end to the cruel difference which you have imposed by your decree of the marc of silver, between the people and their brothers; if you do not obliterate for ever

<sup>17</sup> “*Histoire Parl.*,” Vol. X, pp. 39-46.

these different degrees of eligibility which so manifestly violate your Declaration of Rights of Man, then the country is in danger. On July 14, 1789, the city of Paris contained 300,000 armed men; the active list, published by the municipality, contains barely 80,000 citizens. Compare and judge."<sup>18</sup>

This petition was presented to the Assembly by sixteen delegates. The president, Beauharnais, wished to read it, but the Assembly passed to the order of the day. On the other extreme, Sieyès and Lafayette were working to increase the executive power and proposed a revision of the Constitution with a view to establishing two chambers. Danton denounced this project at the Jacobin Club and said that they were working in the interest of the aristocracy.

Such was the state of public opinion on the eve of the king's flight which occurred on June 21, 1791. No event had such far-reaching-consequences for the fate of the monarchy and the course of the Revolution. It changed the balance of power in the Assembly and led to a new alignment of parties. But more important than this, it accelerated the democratic movement and precipitated a popular outburst for a republic. Up to this time, the Republican Party, composed only of a small group, wielded little influence. The Democratic Party, monarchist in principle, was concerned only with the extension of the suffrage, but had failed to awaken much enthusiasm among the working-men. The Constitutional Party held command of the Assembly and controlled the departments. In spite of the king's protest, as a constitutional monarch he still held a position of some power under the Constitution. He had the initiative in declaring war and peace, the appointments of the diplomatic service, the commanders of the army and navy, the ministers, and the suspensive veto, and a considerable element were working to further increase his powers. Besides, France was monarchical and believed in the good intentions of the king. The bourgeoisie were anxious for a king who would sustain their position. The Revolution so far had only struck at the aristocracy and clergy and a royal democracy was still possible in France. But the king had elected to oppose the new order and the Constitution, and his flight was made in the interest of the old régime in co-operation with foreign powers. It was fatal for the monarchy and ended by giving the direction of the Revolution into the hands of the leaders of democracy.

The king therefore elected, by his flight, to risk all in the hope

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. X, p. 202.

of regaining his power. In spite of his weakness of character, he was always tenacious of his power and prerogatives. All through the Revolution he had yielded only to force and the pressure of public opinion; but when the attack was made on the wealth of the Church and on the status of the clergy in establishing its civil constitution, the king rebelled and from that moment he worked against the Revolution. The letter which he left on his departure for the Assembly throws much light upon his state of mind and showed the false basis on which the hopes of the Constitutional Party rested. However much he might swear to accept the Constitution, it is clear that he would never consent to live under it or work with it, save by compulsion. This letter is the evidence which reveals his true character and by it he stands condemned in the light of history.

"Frenchmen, so long as I hoped to behold public happiness and tranquillity restored by the measures concerted by myself and the Assembly, no sacrifice was too great; calumnies, insult, injury, even the loss of liberty—I have suffered all without a murmur. But now that I behold the kingdom destroyed, property violated, personal safety compromised, anarchy in every part of my dominions, I feel it my duty to lay before my subjects the motives of my conduct. In the month of July 1789, I did not fear to trust myself amongst the inhabitants of Paris. On the 5th and 6th of October, although outraged in my own palace, and a witness of the impunity with which all sorts of crimes were committed, I would not quit France, lest I should be the cause of civil war. I resided in the Tuileries, deprived of almost the necessities of life; my body-guard torn from me, and many of these faithful gentlemen massacred under my very eyes. The most shameful calumnies have been heaped upon my faithful and devoted wife, who participates in my affection for the people, and who has generously taken her share of all the sacrifices I have made for them. Convocation of the States-General, double representation granted to the Third Estate, reunion of the orders, sacrifice of the 20th of June—I have done all this for the nation, and all these sacrifices have been lost, misinterpreted, turned against me. I have been detained as a prisoner in my own palace; instead of guards, jailers have been imposed upon me. I have been rendered responsible for a government that has been torn from my grasp. Though charged to preserve the dignity of France in relation to foreign powers, I have been deprived of the right of declaring peace or war. Your Constitution is a perpetual contradiction between the titles with which it in-



vests me, and the functions it denies me. I am only the responsible chief of anarchy and the seditious power of the clubs wrests from you the power you have wrested from me. . . . In such a situation, all that is left me is to appeal to the justice and affection of my people, to take refuge from the attacks of the factions and the oppression of the Assembly and the clubs in a town of my kingdom, and to resolve there, in perfect freedom, on the modifications the Constitution requires; of the restoration of our holy religion; of the strengthening of the royal power, and the consolidation of true liberty."

A royalist writer, Montgaillard, brands this letter as unworthy of the king and says it lacks "that elevation of character of which misfortune ought never to despoil royalty. To announce that constraint always obtained the sanction of the decrees, is it not to reveal a want of sincerity and an excessive political weakness? How, after that, can they explain or palliate the voluntary and even hasty assent which Louis accorded so often, collectively and without reserve, to this same Constitution against which he protests to-day; his spontaneous appearance at the Assembly, the 4th of February, 1790, the 18th of April, 1791; the diplomatic circular of which the expressions are so positive and so explicit, the dispatch dated the 23d of the same month? After protestations so formal, to say that violence has settled everything casts a very unfavourable light on his own character. Men, in general, do not care to submit themselves, and they render only involuntary homage and a cold deference to their chiefs who seem often to use subterfuges, to cede to suggestions of ruse, to be the sport of artifices unworthy of high rank. The nations wish great qualities, pronounced virtues, or brilliant vices." <sup>19</sup>

Under this condemnation, it is clear that the Constitutional Party undertook an impossible task when they re-established Louis XVI on the throne. The manner of his flight, his disguise, his unkingly conduct at the time of his arrest, the menacing attitude of the communes and the peasants on his return journey, the silence and covered heads of the people of Paris on his entrance into the city, his repudiation of his oaths, and his evident purpose to kindle the flames of civil war—all combined to destroy the charm of royalty and to reveal that the people had lost respect for the king.

The demand for his dethronement was the natural consequence of his conduct. Danton expressed the opinion of the man on

<sup>19</sup> "Histoire de la Révolution Française," Vol. II, p. 357.

the street when he said, that "the King must be either a criminal or an imbecile." The club of the Cordeliers on the very day of the king's departure, demanded that the name of the king be suppressed and that the kingdom be in the future a republic. Why was it then that the Assembly voted to restore the king and to support a shaking throne? It was due to the conviction of the bourgeoisie that their system of government needed a king and to the fear of a republic under the insurgent forces of democracy. But later events have shown that a discredited and perjured king was shifting sand upon which to lay the foundation for the Constitution of a free people. In the state of public opinion of the time, if the republic had been established, it would in all probability have endured and France might have gone forward to a peaceful development. Lafayette says that the republic was considered at the home of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, but was put aside as impracticable from fear of civil war. "M. Fox said to me in England, in 1793," writes Mme. de Staël, "that at the time of the departure of the King for Varennes, he would have liked it if the King had been allowed to leave in peace, and the National Assembly should have proclaimed a Republic. At least France would not have been sullied with the crimes since committed towards the Royal family; and, whether the Republic would or would not have succeeded in a great State, it would have been invaluable that honest men had made the attempt. But that which they most feared, happened: the arrest of the King and his family."<sup>20</sup>

This fact changed the whole situation and the problem raised by the presence of the king in Paris agitated all minds. On the news of the king's departure, the Assembly at once assumed the power in the state and summoning the ministry to act under its authority, took all measures for carrying on the government and pacifying Paris. In a few hours the excitement of the people died down and calm and order reigned in the city. Instructions were sent to all the departments and all France united in accepting the authority of the Assembly. The quietness and orderliness of the city were remarked with surprise by the foreign ambassadors. The suspension of the king and the assumption of power by the National Assembly showed that the government had practically passed over into a republic. Under these conditions the Republican Party came to the front with the demand that the Assembly decree the republic. For the moment, it seemed as if this would be done; other considerations, however,

<sup>20</sup> De Staël, "Considérations sur la Révolution Française," Vol. I, p. 412.

prevailed and the Assembly decided to suspend the royal authority for three months from June 21st to September 14th. The general feeling in the Assembly was opposed to a republic and on June 22d, before any news of the king's capture, it announced not the flight, but the abduction of the King. Roederer cries out, 'It is false; he has meanly deserted his post,' a protest that found no echo in the Assembly."<sup>21</sup>

But there was a very different feeling in the clubs and on the streets of Paris. The club of the Cordeliers drew up an address, demanding that the National Assembly establish a republic in France. "We are now, consequently, in the state we were in after the taking of the Bastille: free and without a king. It remains to consider whether it would be profitable to name another. . . . The Society of the Friends of the Rights of Man can no longer hide from itself that royalty, above all hereditary royalty, is incompatible with liberty. Perhaps we would not so soon have demanded the suppression of royalty if the King, faithful to his oaths, had made a duty of them. We implore you, in the name of our native land, to declare here and now that France is no longer a monarchy; that it is a republic, or at least, to wait until all the departments, until all the primary assemblies have expressed their desires in this important matter, before you think of casting, for a second time, the fairest empire on the earth among the chains and fetters of monarchism."<sup>22</sup>

That the opinions of the Cordeliers were no exception to the common opinion on the streets is witnessed by a letter written by Prince Emmanuel de Salen on the 24th of June, concerning the attitude of the people, "The wise measures taken by the Assembly have made it clear even to the poorest understanding that the King can be dispensed with, and everywhere I have heard the cry, 'we don't need the King; the Assembly and the ministers are all we want. What do we want with an executive power costing twenty-five millions, when everything can be done for two or three?' "<sup>23</sup>

Even the capture of the king and his entrance into Paris did not effect any change in these sentiments. Gorsas in the *Courier* of June 26th, writes, "'No sign of contempt has escaped this great multitude. They have confined themselves to withholding from the fugitives all military honours; they have been received with arms reversed; every citizen kept his hat on his head, as

<sup>21</sup> Aulard, Vol. I, p. 268.

<sup>22</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. X, p. 417.

<sup>23</sup> Aulard, Vol. I, p. 279.

by a common understanding.' And speaking of this attitude, *Bouche de Fer*, the same day, says, 'Here, at last, is a popular vote: the Republic is sanctioned.'"<sup>24</sup>

The *Révolution de Paris* expresses the opinion of a powerful minority when it says, "That a Republic is demanded which alone could conquer Europe." But the Jacobin Club did not share in these opinions. It was still under the leadership of the Lameths and Barnave and they were monarchists. They voted an address drawn up by Barnave in which it was declared, "The King, led astray by criminal suggestions, has deserted the National Assembly. Let us be calm. All dissensions are forgotten, all patriots are united. The National Assembly is our guide; our rallying cry, the Constitution."

The consciousness that France was still monarchical, with the fear of the people, determined the Jacobins to maintain the monarchy. As Lafayette said at the time, "If not Louis XVI, then Louis XVII."

The constitutionalists closed their ranks and the Lameths and Barnave, still the democratic leaders of the Jacobin Club in the Assembly, united with the Moderates. With the return of the king, they came out boldly for his restoration if he would accept the Constitution; but in the meantime, they voted that his suspension from power be continued until the Constitution was ready for his acceptance. Against this action the Right protested as a violation of the king's inviolability and 290 deputies refused to take any further part in the actions of the Assembly. This was unfortunate, as it weakened the party of the king in the Assembly and ultimately defeated the efforts of Barnave in co-operation with Malouet to strengthen the executive power and revise the Constitution.

This union of the Lameths and Barnave with the supporters of the monarchy produced a split in the Jacobin Club, and the constitutionalists, in conjunction with Lafayette, formed the club of the *Feuillants*, leaving the Jacobins to their natural leaders, Brissot, Pétion, and Robespierre. While opposed to the restoration of the king, the Jacobin Club did not dare in the present temper of the Assembly to suggest a republic, but contented themselves with demanding a national convention to determine if the king had forfeited the throne. This question was the subject of heated debates at the Jacobin Club, and it ended with the decision to draw up a petition to the National Assembly.

<sup>24</sup> Aulard, Vol. I, p. 285.

A committee was appointed consisting of five members to draw up the petition: Lanthenas, Sergent, Danton, Ducancel, and Brissot. Brissot wrote the petition which reads: "The undersigned Frenchmen formally and particularly request that the National Assembly shall accept, in the name of the nation, the abdication made on June 21st, by Louis XVI of the crown which had been intrusted to him, and provide for his replacement by *all constitutional means*; the undersigned declaring that they will never consent to recognise Louis XVI as their King, unless the majority of the nation should express a desire contrary to the present petition."<sup>25</sup>

The petition was approved by the Jacobin Club and a deputation was sent to the municipality that peaceable citizens without arms would assemble at the Champ de Mars to sign the petition. There the petition was signed by a large number of people on July 15th; but as some of the Republicans were dissatisfied with the petition and especially the clause, "to provide for his replacement by all constitutional means," it was decided to send the petition back to the Jacobin Club for revision. There an excited debate ensued upon this clause and it was charged that it was inserted in the interest of the Orleanist faction. After four hours' debate the petition was adopted in its original form.

In the meantime, the National Assembly had been convened to discuss the same question. Robespierre had attacked the principle of the king's inviolability and was supported by Gregoire and other deputies. It was then that Barnave made his great speech in favour of the king's restoration.

"You have intrusted to an inviolable king," said Barnave, "the exclusive function of naming the agents of his power, but you have made those agents responsible. To be independent the king must be inviolable: do not let us set aside this axiom. We have never failed to observe this as regards individuals, let us regard it as respects the monarch. Our principles, the Constitution, the law, declare that he has not forfeited his rights: thus, we have to choose between our attachment to the Constitution and our resentment against an individual. . . . Those who would thus sacrifice the Constitution to their anger against one man, seem to me too much inclined to sacrifice liberty in their enthusiasm for some other man; and since they love a republic, it is indeed, the moment to say to them, What, would you wish a republic in such a nation? How is it that you do not fear

<sup>25</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. X, p. 446.

the same fickleness of the people, which to-day manifests itself by hatred, may on another day be displayed by enthusiasm in favour of some great man? . . . Immense damage is done to us when the revolutionary impetus, which has destroyed everything there was to destroy, and which has urged us to the point where we must at last pause, is perpetuated. If the Revolution advance one step further it cannot do so without danger. In the line of liberty, the first act which can follow is the annihilation of royalty; in the line of equality, the first act which must follow is an attempt on all property. . . . It is time, therefore, to end the Revolution. It ought to stop at the moment when the nation is free, and when all Frenchmen are equal. If it continue, it is dishonoured, and we with it; yes, all the world ought to agree that the common interest is involved in the close of the Revolution. Those who have lost ought to perceive that it is impossible to make it retrograde. Those who fashioned it must see that it is at its consummation. . . . Regenerators of the empire! follow straightly your undeviating line; you have been courageous and potent—be to-day wise and moderate. In this will consist the glorious termination of your efforts. Then again, returning to your domestic hearths, you will obtain from all, if not blessings, at least the silence of calumny.”<sup>26</sup>

In this speech, Barnave stands forth as the advocate of the monarchy and the champion of the bourgeoisie in its fear of the Revolution and in its dread that, unless it is arrested, it will end in destroying the rights of property. On July 15th, the National Assembly passed a decree declaring the inviolability of the king by excusing him from all faults and laying the blame upon his counsellors; thus preparing the way for his restoration after the Constitution was completed. When the Jacobin Club heard of this decree, on the next day, it sent out word to suppress the petition; but the club of the Cordeliers and other democratic clubs determined to continue their plans, and on July 17th they drew up a petition signed with six thousand names. Among these we find the names of Chaumette, Robert, Henriot, Santerre, and other radicals who figured in the later Revolution. The petitioners requested the Assembly to repeal the decree passed on the 15th and to “take into consideration that the guilt of Louis XVI, is proved, that this monarch has abdicated; and they should receive his abdication and convoke a new representative body to proceed, as a nation, to judge the

<sup>26</sup> “*Histoire Parl.*,” Vol. XI, p. 57.

guilty, and, above all, to replace and organise a new executive power."<sup>27</sup>

This petition was the culmination of the popular movement in favour of the dethronement and the formation of a republic. The petitioners represented in their ranks many of the turbulent men of Paris, the *enragés* who advocated a social revolution and a division of property. The movement had been gathering headway ever since the king's flight. On the 30th of June, 30,000 citizens had assembled around the hall of the National Assembly to petition it to decide nothing until the Assembly had consulted the departments. On July 7th, the Cordeliers led another movement which had the same purpose. As the National Assembly seemed disinclined to take any action, the Cordeliers on the 12th of July got up another demonstration. After the decree of the 15th, the agitation increased and the mob tried to enter the Assembly hall, but were repulsed by the National Guards. Robespierre and other deputies came out and told the people that it was too late, that the decree was passed. This infuriated the people and led to the demonstration of July 17th and the tragic affair of the Champ de Mars. On this day the Assembly found itself face to face with the people and it determined to use force to quell the incipient insurrection.

The people had assembled on the Champ de Mars to protest against the restoration of the monarchy and were assuming a dangerous attitude. Mayor Bailly unfurled the red flag of the martial law and, supported by Lafayette and the National Guards, ordered the multitude to disperse; but long impunity had led the people to believe that the government would not dare to use force against them. At first they treated the order with ridicule, and then, growing bolder, advanced against Lafayette and the troops. Lafayette gave the command to fire and the multitude fled in all directions, leaving the ground strewn with the bodies of the killed and wounded. The massacre of the Champ de Mars was long remembered, and the people treasured in their hearts the memory and waited for the day when they would have their revenge. While Lafayette and the bourgeois class had triumphed, yet the victory was bought at a heavy price, as it inaugurated the war of classes which later was to mark the steps of the Revolution with blood.

<sup>27</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XI, p. 115.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ACCELERATION OF DEMOCRACY THROUGH WAR: THE DOWNFALL OF THE MONARCHY

ON the 14th of September, 1791, an event took place in the hall of the National Assembly which was hailed as the dawn of a new day for France and the end of the Revolution: that was when the king came to the Assembly and took the oath to the Constitution and promised to govern France on constitutional principles. "I have come," he said, "to consecrate solemnly here the acceptance I have given to the constitutional act. I swear to be faithful to the nation and the law, and to employ all the power delegated to me for maintaining the Constitution, and carrying its decrees into effect. May this great and memorable epoch be the re-establishment of peace, and become the gage of the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the empire."

On that day Paris went wild with joy and immense crowds came to the Tuileries to manifest their affection for the king. Paris gave itself over to a series of fêtes and public rejoicings at the prospect of the end of the Revolution. The king was greeted everywhere with cries of "Vive le Roi," and it was reported that the cry of "Vive la Nation," was no longer heard in the streets. At the theatre, the king and queen were received with enthusiasm and the queen remarked that the spirit of the people had changed. Everything seemed to hold out hope for a new order and the end of all revolutionary disorders. In his "History of the Revolution" which closed with this period, Rabaut de Saint-Etienne wrote: "But finally the King accepted the French Constitution, and this enlightened step decided the Revolution. No doubt we shall still be agitated; the privileged will still have the means of disturbing our repose, and our passion for liberty will encounter mistrust for a long time, and even the excesses which accompany it. The newly constituted authorities will still fluctuate between their limitations and the full extent of their powers. Our finances will await that knowledge and easy facility which experience alone can give. Foreign Courts will or will not recognise our Constitution according as their political views will



make them hope or despair of profiting by our spoils. But the power of the French Revolution will defend itself against everyone, for it is the work of the ages, of nature, of reason, and of force."<sup>1</sup>

Rabaut was not alone in this opinion. All the leaders of the constitutional party felt that they had reached the end of their labours and that the principles of '89 had been realised in the Constitution of 1791, and that there was now before the country an era of prosperity under the limited monarchy. In this period of good feeling, Lafayette, at the suggestion of the king, had proposed to the National Assembly that all persons in a state of arrest or accusation, relative to the flight of the king and of the Revolution, should be immediately set at liberty; and a general amnesty was declared. This step raised grave forebodings in the minds of the constitutionalists; for, on the one hand, they feared that it would encourage the royalists in their counter-revolutionary plots; and on the other, that it would revive the activities of the Democrats and Republicans who had been driven into hiding or exile after the massacre of the people at the Champ de Mars in the preceding July. This general amnesty did encourage the royalists to continue their pernicious activities; for they did not accept the results of the Revolution, and invited the attack by the Jacobins who had failed to realise their aims and looked forward to a second Revolution which would make the masses of the people, who up to this time had had little profit from the Revolution, share in its benefits. Moreover, the Jacobins profited by the amnesty to renew their activities in the sections of Paris and the departments at the time when the elections were being held for the deputies for the Legislative Assembly. The effect of this was seen in the number and character of the deputies who were returned with republican sympathies and democratic ideas. In some sections of Paris, they succeeded in returning democratic electors who were able to send a number of avowed Democrats to the Assembly. Among these were the Cordeliers trio, Basire, Merlin of Thionville, and Chabot, an ex-priest, together with Brissot and Condorcet, who, during the interregnum, had come out publicly for a republic. In the provinces, their influence was still more marked, and Couthon, and Romme from Puy-de Dome, and Lequinio from Bretagne belonged to the same party. Under the self-denying ordinance, all the members of the Constituent Assembly had been excluded from re-election and this deprived

<sup>1</sup> Rabaut, "Précis Historique de la Révolution Française," p. 400.

the new Assembly of the men who had learned the methods of administration and were interested in upholding the Constitution. The new deputies were men without experience in legislation, though most of them had held office in the departments or the districts. There was a large number of deputies who belonged to the Jacobin clubs, or affiliated with them, and while they did not form the majority of the Legislative Assembly, they formed a powerful minority whose talents and ability enabled them to attract to themselves a sufficient number of deputies so as to give them, later, the command of the Assembly. The constitutionalists feared the Jacobins and tried to curb their power before the Constituent Assembly was dissolved at the end of September.

"Not only did the Jacobins exist," writes Ferrières, "but they existed with *éclat*: Danton, Brissot, Robespierre seemed, from the height of their power, to challenge the constitutionalists. If the latter did not find a prompt means to destroy this rival society, they would lose their influence in the government: the session ended, the new legislature and the ministry would no longer be dependent upon them. To cut the evil at its roots, the constitutionalists undertook to destroy the Jacobin societies."<sup>2</sup>

The Minister of Justice, Duport du Tertre, was enlisted in this service, and he called the attention of the nation to the pernicious activities of the Jacobin societies; but without avail. They were too strongly entrenched in the departments and had secured control of many of the sections of Paris. They were a factor to be reckoned with and were destined to increase their power, unless the nation could develop without disturbances from factions within and the foreign foes without. It was just here that the policy of the royalists and counter-revolutionary party played into the hands of the Jacobins, and by refusing to accept the Constitution and to support the king and the constitutional party, the royalists raised issues which led to civil and foreign wars under which the Jacobins rose to power and finally overthrew the monarchy. Undoubtedly the constitutionalists were wrong in thinking that they could arrest the Revolution. For there were too many forces in opposition to the status quo, too many passions and interests had been awakened and excited, to be suddenly allayed by the restoration of a king who in some quarters was charged with accepting the Constitution under compulsion, and in others, as being unworthy of trust after the spirit he had shown during his flight and the letter he had written

<sup>2</sup>"Mémoires," Vol. III, p. 177.

repudiating his oaths. It was under these conditions that the Legislative Assembly met on the 1st of October 1791, and the session was opened with a formal swearing to the Constitution, which by its parade and ostentation gave the suggestion of insincerity on the part of many of the deputies. The Assembly was divided into two parties: the Right and the Left. The constitutionalists represented the conservative force in the Assembly and in the swing of the Revolution had passed over from the Left in the Constituent Assembly to the Right in the Legislative, under the leadership of Dumas, Ramond, Vaublanc, and Beugnot, and associated with them, the old leaders of the Constituent Assembly, Lafayette, Bailly, Lameth, Barnave, Duport, Chapelier, Dandre, La Rochefoucauld, and not least, Duport du Tertre, Minister of Justice, and nearly all the members of the directories of the departments, judges of the peace, and the officers of the general staff both of the National Guards and the troops of the line. This party had a common standard around which rallied all men who desired the success of the Constitution and believed in law and order. It had the support of the great body of the bourgeois class.

They desired the return of the émigrés to France and believed that this was necessary to restore good order, but they were unwilling to share with the nobles the power or the emoluments of the offices.

The republican and democratic party composed a large minority of the Assembly and formed the Left. It was closely allied with the Jacobin Club, and under the influence of Robespierre, Pétion, Buzot, Prier, who were represented in the Assembly by Brissot. In coalition with them were a group of deputies from the department of the Gironde, who were republicans at heart though they accepted for the time being the monarchy. These men—Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, Ducos, Fonfrède—dreamed of a free state and a nation governed by an aristocracy of talent. It is related that "Reinhard, a German traveller, who fell in with a group of the new deputies on their way to Paris, fell under their charm, and resolved to cast his lot with a country about to be governed by such men."<sup>3</sup>

There were soon united with them, Barbaroux of Marseilles, Isnard, Lasource, and Condorcet; and Brissot became their leader. The deputies of the Gironde, being able and eloquent men, naturally took the lead with the party of the Left, and later dominated the Assembly by their tactics and parliamentary

<sup>3</sup> Acton, "Lectures on the French Revolution," p. 200.

abilities and the logic of events; for the great mass of the deputies were men of mediocre talents, ready to be swayed by each party in turn, siding with the Right or the Left as popular feeling or passion indicated.

In spite of these divisions of parties, there was a general agreement to be faithful to the Constitution and to co-operate with the king. But the struggle in the Assembly was now no longer as in the Constituent Assembly over principles, but for power; and this affected the attitude of the parties to the great issues at stake and led to conflicts which ultimately decided the fate of the monarchy. It has been said, "that the Girondists were indifferent to the form of government, provided they governed and could dispose of the money and the offices; but, feeling that the constitutionalists would not abandon their prey, they rallied to the republicans, waiting to take a decided position until after the events and sold themselves to the Court or gave themselves to the republic, according as their interests or circumstances demanded."<sup>4</sup>

However this may be, it is undeniable that the Girondists supported those measures which tended to destroy the power of the constitutionalists and to drive the Revolution onward one step nearer the goal of the republic. Another factor which is of less importance, but which exerted its influence upon the actions of the Assembly, was the growth of democratic manners and customs during the interregnum and the effect of the flight of the king in diminishing his prestige and destroying the glamour and majesty which surround the throne. The result of this was seen at the first session of the Legislative Assembly and there were not a few democrats who were ready to give expression to their ideas. When the Assembly was organized, it sent word through a deputation to the king that it was ready to receive him. The king refused to receive the deputation, and sent a message by the Minister of Justice. The deputation insisted on seeing the king; he finally received it, and its leader, Ducastel, addressing the king, said, "Sire, the national Legislative Assembly is definitely constituted and it has appointed us to inform you of this." The king replied in a cold manner, "I cannot attend your Assembly until Friday." This reception of the deputation by the king created an unfavourable impression and led to a bitter discussion, when Couthon, democrat deputy, raised the question of addressing the king by the titles of "Sire" and "Majesty" and of giving him a chair when he came to the Assembly, differ-

<sup>4</sup>"Mémoires," Vol. III, pp. 201, 3.

ent from that of the president and ornamented with gold. It was finally decreed that the chair of the king should be the same as that of the president, and the king should be received by the deputies, seated and covered. The king resented this decree as derogatory to royalty. The Feuillants harangued the people and there was a great outcry and a wave of reaction and popular disapproval of the decree.

Mayor Bailly came to the Assembly in the name of the municipality and the people and assured the deputies that the people would defend the Constitution with their blood; that the two powers of the Constitution were equally balanced and that they must respect each other; and that the Revolution was finished and the people longed for repose. Under the force of public opinion, the Assembly rescinded its decree and the king was received later as befitted his dignity and royalty. But this trivial incident showed the temper of the Assembly and foreshadowed a spirit which would ultimately bring the king into conflict with it, if events should arise which should reveal a difference of policy. Now events did arise which hastened the creation of this breach. These events were the spirit of the refractory priests and the attitude of the émigrés towards the Constitution and their country. They became the burning questions of the day and absorbed the energies of the Assembly for the first two months. The counter-revolutionists precipitated the issue by the policy which they pursued. Since the end of September 1791, there had been a large emigration of the noblesse and the officers in the service to join the standards of the brothers of the king and the Prince of Condé. The latter had refused to recognise the Constitution and said that the king had accepted it only under compulsion, and then invited the noblesse to join their ranks and unite with the foreign powers who were preparing to invade France. Their call to emigrate had been heeded by an increasing number of the noblesse, and a ceaseless stream of emigrants continued to leave their homes and offices and to unite with those who were plotting to invade their country. The king and his ministers realised the danger of this emigration and its bad effect upon the minds of the people and sent letters to the princes inviting them to return to France, but without effect. The Assembly in its turn now became alarmed and suspected some secret understanding between the king and his brothers. Brissot led the forces of the Gironde, seconded by Condorcet, Isnard, and Vergniaud, to incite the Assembly to pass a decree against the émigrés. After long and tumultuous debates in which all the

passions were excited, the Assembly passed a decree, in November, in which they summoned the Count de Provence to return to France by the 1st of January, 1792, on penalty of losing his rights to the regency, and threatened the émigrés with the loss of their estates and the penalty of death. The decree was looked upon as a test of the king's sincerity to the Constitution and whether he would decide against the nation in favour of his brothers and courtiers.

Brissot ended his great speech on this question by saying, "Would you check this revolt? Then strike the blow on the other side of the Rhine: it is not in France. It was by such decided steps that the English prevented James II from impeding the establishment of their liberty. They did not amuse themselves with framing petty laws against emigration, but demanded that foreign princes should drive the English princes from their dominions. The necessity of this measure was seen here from the first. Ministers will talk to you of considerations of state, family reasons; these considerations, these weaknesses cover a crime against liberty. The King of a free people has no family. Again, I counsel you attack the leaders only; let it no longer be said, 'These malcontents are very strong: these 25,000,000 of men must be very weak thus to consider them.' It is to foreign powers especially that you should address your demands. I say it is necessary to compel those powers to reply to us, one of two things; either they will render homage to our Constitution, or they will declare against it. In the first place, you have not to balance, it is necessary that you should assail the powers that dare to threaten you. In the last century when Portugal and Spain lent an asylum to James II, England attacked both. Have no fears—the image of liberty, like the head of Medusa, will affright the armies of our enemies; they fear to be abandoned by their soldiers, and that is why they prefer the line of expectation, and an armed mediation. The English Constitution and an aristocratic liberty will be the basis of the reforms they will propose to you, but you will be unworthy of liberty if you accept yours at the hands of your enemies. . . . I will not condescend to speak of other princes; they are unworthy of being included in the number of your serious enemies. I believe that France ought to elevate its hopes and its attitude. Unquestionably you have declared to Europe that you will not attempt any more conquests, but you have the right to say to it, 'Choose between certain rebels and a nation.'"<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Lamartine, "History of the Girondists," Vol. I, pp. 231-3. Quoted.

And Vergniaud followed Brissot at the tribune at which he made an impassioned appeal to the Assembly to pass the decree against the princes. "We are told 'the émigrés have no evil designs against their country; it is only a temporary absence: Where are the legal proofs of what you assert?' Legal proofs! And have you calculated the blood they will cost you to obtain them? Now let us forestall our enemies by adopting rigorous measures; in the first place seize on the property of the absentees. As for the officers who have deserted, the Code Pénal prescribes their fate—death and infamy. The French princes are even more culpable; and the summons to return to their country, which it is proposed to address to them, is neither sufficient for your honour nor for your safety. Their attempts are openly made; either they must tremble before you, or you must tremble before them; you must choose. Men talk of the profound grief this will cause the King: Brutus immolated his guilty offspring at the shrine of his country, but the heart of Louis XVI shall not be put to so severe a trial. If these princes, alike bad brothers and citizens, refuse to obey, let him turn to the hearts of the French nation, and they will amply repay his losses."<sup>6</sup>

It was by these appeals that the decrees were passed and the first note of that war was struck which sounded the downfall of the throne and heralded the rising of democracy and the establishment of the republic.

At the same time, the Assembly struck at the refractory priests. They were accused of stirring up the people against the Constitution and kindling civil war in the departments of the west where the people were fanatically devoted to religion and the church. Revolts broke out in Calvados and La Vendée. The clergy became, in the eyes of the Girondists, instigators of revolt and enemies of their country. After stormy debates, the Assembly passed a decree against all the priests who refused to take the oath to the civil Constitution of the clergy, fidelity to the nation, and to the king, under penalty of being deprived of their pensions and being held as suspects. These measures were considered as too severe by the party of the Right and they encouraged the king to oppose the decrees. The department of Paris under the control of the constitutionalists and led by Talleyrand and La Rochefoucauld addressed a petition to the king urging him to veto the decrees. The king took three weeks for consideration and then sent a message to the Assembly vetoing both the decrees. The effect of these vetoes upon the Assembly was pro-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 235-6. Quoted.

found and marked the first break between the king and the Assembly.

During these debates in the Assembly in the middle of October, Lafayette laid down his command of the National Guard and retired to his home in Auvergne. Bailly, discouraged with the loss of the support of Lafayette, resigned his office as mayor. A new election for mayor took place in the middle of November. Lafayette was put forward by the Constitutionals for mayor and Pétion by the Democrats. In the interest of Pétion's election, one of the popular papers published this account of his visit to England. "M. Pétion has received at London a most favourable reception by all the English patriots. He assisted at a civic fête which the society of the revolution celebrated on the anniversary of the English Revolution. That of France was not forgotten. The banquet was crowned by a great number of toasts among which were these: The Rights of Man; the Revolution of 1688; the Revolution of France; may Edmund Burke continue to serve the cause of liberty a long while by writing against it. A toast proposed by M. Pétion was received with transports: It is 'the eternal union of the English and French people founded on the unalterable principles of justice and liberty'; this fête ended with the celebrated air, *Ca ira*; this tune which makes tyrants pale and gives the world the signal of liberty."<sup>7</sup>

Lafayette was bitterly attacked in the democratic papers for his royalist sympathies and was charged with seeking a dictatorship, and above all with the massacre of the Champ de Mars, "which ought to make the friends of liberty suspect him." But the deciding factor in the election which was still limited to the bourgeois class, was the influence of the court and the queen who hated Lafayette. "De Lafayette," said the queen to Bertrand de Molleville, "only wishes to be mayor of Paris in order afterwards to be mayor of the palace. Pétion is a Jacobin and a republican, but he is too great a fool ever to be capable of becoming the head of a party."<sup>8</sup>

And in the election in which only 10,600 voted, Pétion received 6,708 votes against Lafayette's 3,125. This election of Pétion was one of the great mistakes of the court party and the queen would rue the day when she threw her influence in favour of a man who was one of her bitterest enemies. It had far-reach-

<sup>7</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XII, p. 328.

<sup>8</sup> De Molleville, "Histoire de la Révolution de France," Vol. VI, p. 131. Edition 1802.



ing effects and placed Paris in the hands of the Girondist party and was one reason of its rise to power three months later. Their first attacks were made against the ministers of War and the Interior, Duportail and Duport du Tertre, whom the Assembly charged with inefficiency, neglect to provide the army with munitions of war, and with sympathy with the aristocratic faction. Duportail resigned on December 2d and was replaced at the war department by Narbonne, a candidate of Lafayette and a lover of Mme. de Staël, the queen of the constitutional salon. Montmorin had resigned a few weeks before the seals of the foreign office, and Delessart took his place, and Cahier de Gerville, a member of the Paris administration, a democrat and a man of brusque manners, became Minister of the Interior. The question of war was the great issue before the Assembly in December, and the king, in mitigating the effect of his veto of the decree against the émigrés, had sent a letter to the emperor; on December 14th the king came before the Assembly and stated that he had urged the emperor to use his power to disband the troops of the émigrés; and he also urged the Elector of Trèves to remove the émigrés from his territory, saying, if this was not done before January 15, 1792, he would propose that France declare war. At the same time, Narbonne, the war minister, came before the Assembly and urged that the country prepare for war; that the frontier fortresses be replenished with provisions and war material, and that recruits be secured to fill up the regiments and put them on a war footing. He also proposed that Luckner, Rochambeau, and Lafayette be appointed generals of the three armies to be placed on the frontiers. The Assembly at once voted large credits for the army and the appointments of the generals; but these active preparations did not wholly satisfy the Girondist party. They considered the Feuillants in league with the court and were suspicious of the king since his vetoes.

Brissot denounced them in the press, saying, "Number them, name them, their names denounce them; they are the relics of the dethroned aristocracy, who would fain resuscitate a constitutional nobility, establish a second legislative chamber and a senate of nobles, and who implore, in order to gain their ends, the armed intervention of the powers. They have sold themselves to the Château de Tuileries, and sell there a great portion of the Assembly; they have amongst them neither men of genius nor men of resolution; their talent is but treason, their genius but intrigue."

In spite of this denunciation the constitutionalists held the power and maintained their influence over the people of Paris through the excitement caused by the talk of war. Besides they had control of the ministers and the confidence of the king. There were three parties which desired war for their own personal ends. The court desired war as a means of introducing foreign powers into France and thereby destroying the Constitution and establishing the old régime; the constitutionalists with Lafayette urged the war in the hope that it might be the means of strengthening the executive, and of leading to a modification of the Constitution in the direction of two chambers; the Girondists were for war, because they hoped to unmask the intrigues of the court and find grounds to establish a republic.

"It is well that we should be betrayed," said Brissot, "because then we shall destroy the traitors." The only party opposed to war was Robespierre and the Jacobins. They feared that the war would play into the hands of the constitutionalists and give Lafayette the opportunity to win new laurels, make himself the Cromwell of the Revolution, and lead to the destruction of liberty. In some degree, Danton shared in these fears. On the same day as the king appeared before the Assembly, December 14th, there was a great discussion by the Jacobins on the issue of war. Suspicions had been awakened by the fact that Louis XVI proposed war, that Narbonne prepared for it, and Lafayette directed it. The Jacobins thought that they saw in this combination a plot against the Constitution. Robespierre expressed the general fear when he asked, "Is it a war of a king against other kings? No, it is the war of all the enemies of the French Constitution against the French Revolution." Brissot argued that it was necessary to have war in order to destroy the horde of brigands at Coblenz, and he said, "Do you wish to destroy at a single blow the aristocracy, the refractories, the discontented; destroy Coblenz; the chief of the nation will be forced to rule by the Constitution, seeing his safety only in his attachment to the Constitution, directing his steps by it alone."<sup>9</sup>

Danton raised the question of the motives which actuated the different parties in advocating war. "We shall have this war," he said, "but we have the right to scrutinise the conduct of the agents who will be employed. There exist two factions, one which holds to all the prejudices of the ancient barbarity—these are the same men who, wishing to figure at the commencement of the Revolution, have made the confederation between the Saint

<sup>9</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XII, pp. 409-11.

Priests, the Breteuils, the aristocrats of Europe. The latter wish an absolute counter-revolution. The other party no doubt is that faction which is more dangerous; it is composed of those men who disguise their opinion, whom I have accused face to face in this Assembly, who have said that the Revolution can be retrograded; that a system equivalent to M. Mounier's can be reproduced. We should forewarn ourselves against this faction who wish to make a profit out of a general war, who would like to give us an English Constitution, in the hope of giving us soon the government of Constantinople. I wish that we may have war, it is indispensable; we ought to have war, but it is necessary, before all things, to exhaust the means which will spare us from it."<sup>10</sup> And he went on to show that the ministers had not used their power to disperse the forces of the émigrés and that, before engaging in war, the king ought to be required to use the power of the state against the émigrés at Coblenz.

It was this suspicion of the Jacobins and Girondists against the real intentions of the king which created the controversies during the next two months and led in the end to the act of accusation against Delessart and sent him before the High Court of Versailles to be judged of offences against the nation. During the end of December and January 1792, the Assembly was agitated with discussions over the war and the revelation of counter-revolutionary plots. In January the Assembly passed a decree against the princes at Coblenz, putting them beyond the law. Narbonne enlightened the Assembly on the state of the army and the measures taken for defence. The *Révolution de Paris* expressed the opinions of the democrats that the king should continue to reign so long as he remain loyal to the Constitution. But the spirit of faction continued to grow and there were bitter controversies in the Jacobin Club over the question of the war. The plots of the royalists and the threatening attitude of Austria and Prussia began to raise suspicions that the king and the court were acting in complicity with them. We know now that these suspicions were well founded, but then they could only be surmised. On January 14th, Guadet called the attention of the Assembly to these facts: "Of all the facts communicated to the Assembly that which has been most striking, is the plan of a congress to be assembled for the purpose of obtaining a modification of the French Constitution, a plan long suspected, and at length announced as possible by the committees and the ministers. If it be true that this intrigue is conducted by men who

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 411.

fancy that they discover in it the means of emerging from political non-entity into which they have now sunk; if it be true that some of the agents of the executive power are seconding with all the influence of their connections this abominable plot; if it be true that they think to bring us by delay and discouragement to accept this ignominious mediation—ought the National Assembly to shut its eyes to such dangers? Rather let us swear to die, all of us, on this spot.” He was not allowed to finish; the whole Assembly arose, exclaiming, “Yes, yes, we swear it.” And it was decreed that any one taking part in this congress should be branded as a traitor to his country. This decree was aimed at Delessart and the old leaders of the constituent Assembly.

Dissensions now broke out in the ministry between Bertrand de Molleville who was intriguing against the Constitution, and Narbonne who was preparing the country for war. Narbonne wished the ministry to support more actively the Assembly. He threatened to resign, unless De Molleville retired. Lafayette urged him to withdraw his threat, but when the king heard of the intrigue, he dismissed Narbonne. Soon after, the Girondists attacked the ministry in the Assembly and forced the retirement of all the ministers.

The king had no other resource now than to take a ministry drawn from the Girondist party. The king accepted their nominations, Roland, Servan, Clavière, Demourniers. The Girondists now began to organise the people to support their power and found a strong ally in Pétion, mayor of Paris.

In February 1792, Pétion had written a letter to Buzot in which he had said: “The bourgeoisie, that large and comfortable class, are breaking with the people; they have set themselves above the people; they think themselves on a level with the nobility, who despise them, and only wait a favourable moment for humiliating them.” And he urged, in view of the danger from the classes who had been deprived of their privileges, that the bourgeoisie unite with the people as in 1789: “We ought to have one cry; alliance between the bourgeoisie and the people! or if you prefer it: union of the Third Estate against the privileged.”

As the war fever began to seize the nation, and all the departments and Paris were agitated with war preparations, the Girondists decided to arm the people and introduced the red bonnets of the sans-culotte. The first suggestion of arming the people with pikes had been made to the club of the Cordeliers by a patriot mother who was alarmed by the plots of the

royalists. This idea was taken up with enthusiasm by the club and they at once proceeded to urge the making of pikes. The club sent a letter to the other sections pointing out that it would be very easy to arm 30,000 brave citizens for the defence of liberty. The Girondists seized upon this idea and Brissot wrote in his paper of February 13th, " 'Whilst the enemies of the people prepare themselves against them, the people also make their preparations; but they make them frankly and openly. The pikes have commenced the Revolution, the pikes will achieve it. This glorious movement of the people, ready to rise up with all their force to destroy the fatal diversion which must precede and accompany an external war,—this awakening of the lion is frightful to those who counted on his sleep. Do they say, Where will these pikes be directed? Everywhere where you will be, enemies of the people! They will be carried on the terrace of the Feuillants as if to menace the Château of the Tuileries; would they dare to go there? Yes, without doubt, if you are there. But who commands these pikes? Necessity. Who will distribute them? Patriotism. To whom will they be delivered? To courage. What will be the result of this new armament? The destruction of the enemies of the people. I know, enemies of the people, that you wish to divide the people to conquer them; I know that you wish to inspire that portion of the people whose means permit them to serve their country with a uniform and a gun, with your fears and fury; but this portion of the people knows well that its brothers, less fortunate, have the same interest as itself; that, together, they wish to fight for liberty and equality; that their enemies are the same; that their bayonets ought to advance on the same line; finally, that these pikes are not destined to be used against bayonets, but against poniards.' " <sup>11</sup>

On the next day, the municipality under the direction of Pétion ordered the fabrication of pikes to arm the people and decreed that the sign of patriotism would be the cockade and the national colours; but no man could carry a pike, unless he had been first registered in his section.

This step of arming the democracy was to lead to a new consciousness of the people in their power and it gave rise to hopes among the people that the Revolution would go forward in their interest. Its first effect was to give a new impetus to equalising passions; and now the appeal of the leaders among the Jacobins was more and more in the direction of equality. The sense of

<sup>11</sup> "Histoire Parl." Vol. XIII, p. 220.

uncertainty, the spread of the spirit of anarchy, the disorganisation of the government, the wild theories of equality and liberty, the constant rumours of plots by the royalists, the false alarms, all combined to create a fear which, it was said by those who lived through this period, was greater than that which existed during the Reign of Terror. In the beginning of April, the long-slumbering enmities between the two parties in the Jacobin Club broke out into mutual recriminations. The extreme Jacobins, like Collot d'Herbois, Chabot, and even Robespierre, who now went by the name of "enragés," denounced the Girondist leaders and accused them of drawing nearer to the constitutionalists, intriguing with Lafayette, and even with the party of the court. Brissot had taken all the new ministers from the Gironde and excluded any member from the extreme party and they in turn assailed the new ministers and the Girondist leaders. The *Révolution de Paris* published a long article on this division entitled, "Scandale donné par la Société Jacobin," in which it said, "In 1791, a schism arose in the bosom of the friends of the Constitution; a schism menaces them still. Robespierre and Brissot are the two leaders of the parties. Here are the facts: the great question of war has been discussed in a profound and altogether extraordinary manner. Opinion is very evidently divided; personalities are mingled with opinions; the personalities have wounded the amour-propre, and wounded amour-propre has made some enemies perhaps irreconcilable. The declaration of war seems, however, to portend an understanding which seems necessary to those who are indifferent to every party; but, at the moment, when war is to be declared, at the moment when the State has more need of union, then a poisoned hand carries division among the friends of liberty. Collot d'Herbois has commenced by denouncing Roederer, Brissot, and Condorcet; Chabot has denounced the bishop Fauchet and all the deputation of the Gironde, Grangeneuve alone excepted; Robespierre has promised that he will unveil an intrigue, a combination, a system plotted in the midst of the assembly, and which tends to nothing less than to retrograde the Revolution: and, see with almost every mind exalted, how the friends of the Constitution have given a bizarre spectacle, almost indecent, of an outrageous struggle, in which we shall see if someone does not come out of it conqueror or conquered."

But nothing could heal the breach which had been made between the two parties, and the Girondists went on their way, pursuing their policy without regard to the foes which they had

left in their rear. Resolved upon war, the Girondist ministry advised the king to go in person to the Assembly and urge it to declare war against the King of Bohemia and Hungary. This step carried the Assembly off its feet, and amid tremendous enthusiasm, the Assembly declared war on April 20, 1792.

This declaration of war was momentous for the Girondists, the nation, and the monarchy. Its first result was to awaken into life and activity the republican party and to rouse among the masses the democratic passion and the spirit of equality. On April 29th, Carra who was an anti-republican came out in his paper with the statement, "The idea of a purely republican government might then (before the declaration of war) have appeared impracticable; but to-day thou art right, and, if things are so to fall out, I vote with thee."<sup>12</sup>

But as yet there was no evidence that the Girondists were working for a republic. Robespierre, however, continued to make this charge against the Girondists, and Camille Desmoulins wrote in his journal that Brissot and his party were joined in an alliance with Lafayette to establish a republic. Again, a little later, he wrote, "The most fanatical royalist would prefer the aristocratic republic of Lafayette and his military government, which is now threatening us, to a Constitution which makes a cobbler's prentice the peer of a French prince, and would put their names together on the same jury lists."<sup>13</sup> At this time Robespierre was laying stress upon equality and the cause of the common people. The middle of May he inveighed against those who claimed that they were defenders of the people, and then tried to deprive them of their rights; and he was never tired of repeating that the poor man must not be deprived of his rights.

Robespierre held closely to the letter of the Constitution and he demanded that the king should be held to the letter of the law. He believed that the force of events and the spirit of principles embodied in the Constitution would gradually bring about a change in the interest of all the people. While Robespierre and the Jacobins repudiated the idea of a republic, yet they were in close touch with the rising spirit of democracy and were determined that the Constitution should not be changed in the interest of the bourgeois class and that the king would be compelled to be loyal to the Constitution as it was. Robespierre saw clearly that the force of the Revolution would bring the people more and more to the front and lead to the triumph of

<sup>12</sup> Aulard, "French Revolution," Vol. I, p. 356. Quoted.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

democracy. He did not see that the war, far from hindering this movement, would accelerate it and that it would unchain popular forces and passions which would prove irresistible. He was obsessed by the fear of a Cromwell and the danger of the triumph of the king and the royalists through the war. As the war progressed, and the defeat of the armies on the frontier seemed to bring nearer the possibility of the victory of the foreign invader, charges multiplied against the Austrian committee and the disloyalty of the king. It was the conduct of the war and the defeat of the army which brought matters to a crisis and changed the whole outlook for the Jacobins and the fortunes of the king. Prussia was now preparing to join Austria and invade France. The Assembly, alarmed by these events, passed three decrees which led to a break between the king and the Girondist party; the first, on May 27th, voted for the deportation of the refractory clergy; the second, on May 29th, for the disbandment of the king's guard; the third, on June 8th, for the formation of a camp of twenty thousand men near Paris. On June 12th, the king sanctioned the decree disbanding his guard, but vetoed the decrees on the refractory priests and the formation of the camp near Paris, and then dismissed the Girondist ministers, Roland, Servan, and Clavière. This action of the king awakened the public mistrust, and rumours were current that he was under the control of the Austrian committee. It was charged that the king had increased his body-guard from 1,800 to 6,000 men, composed mainly of royalists. The Assembly voted that the retiring ministers carried with them the regrets of the nation. The king chose his new ministers from the members of the constitutional party, but they were men without credit or influence. Nevertheless this party of all shades of opinion rallied around the throne and denounced the decrees as unconstitutional. On the 16th of June Lafayette wrote from the headquarters of the army, denouncing the decrees and urging the Assembly to be loyal to the Constitution, and to close the Jacobin clubs. He emphasised the divided state of the country, placed between two enemies, the foreign foe and the Jacobin societies, and continued, "Both must be destroyed. But you will not have the power to destroy them, unless you be constitutional and just. Look around you; can you deny that a faction, and, to avoid every vague denomination, that the Jacobin faction has caused all these disorders? It is to this faction that I loudly attribute them. Organised like a separate empire, in its principal society and its affiliations, blindly directed by a few



ambitious leaders, this party forms a distinct corporation amongst the French people whose powers it usurps by overawing its representatives and its functionaries." He then urged that more attention should be paid to the needs of the armies and that "the well-being of the troops be no longer subject to fatal delays," and his letter closed with these words, "Let the reign of clubs, annihilated by you, give place to the reign of law; their usurpations, to the firm and independent exercise of the constituted authorities; their disorganising maxims, to the genuine principles of liberty; their frantic fury, to the calm and persevering courage of a nation which knows its rights and defends them; and lastly, their sectarian combinations to the true interests of the country, which, in this moment of danger, ought to rally around them all those to whom its subjugation and ruin are objects of atrocious satisfaction and infamous speculation!"<sup>14</sup>

This letter was imprudent and precipitated a struggle which ended in the downfall of the throne. It could only have been justified, if Lafayette had the means to carry it to success and the support of the king in his effort to uphold the Constitution; but the king had another purpose and had just sent Mallet du Pin on a secret mission to the foreign powers and put his faith in the coalition and the foreign invader. Lafayette's letter was received with applause by the Right, and in silence by the Left. It was proposed to print it and send it to the departments which would be a sign of approval; but Vergniaud objected, saying that they must make a distinction between the petition of an individual and the lectures from an armed general. Some members denied the authenticity of the letter, and M. Courbé exclaimed, "Even if it were not signed, none but Lafayette could have written it." Then Guadet rose and pointed out that the letter could not be that of Lafayette because it was written on the 16th of June and alluded to the dismissal of Dumourier—(many voices, "That is false") which had taken place on that day. Either the signature is not his, or it was attached to a blank, which was left for a faction to fill up at pleasure. "Besides, according to his known sentiments, it was impossible that Lafayette was the author of this letter. When Cromwell dared to speak in a way similar to that which you have heard—(They applauded on the Left side. Many members of the opposed side rose up, crying, "That is abominable, Monsieur"). Many members wished to speak, and only after some time did

<sup>14</sup> Thiers, "French Revolution," Vol. I, pp. 291-2. Quoted.

Guadet regain the tribune. He began, "I was saying," again some one interrupted him, "You were talking about Cromwell." "I shall return to him," he replied; "I was saying that when Cromwell spoke in a similar way, liberty was lost in England, and I cannot convince myself that Washington's rival wished to imitate the conduct of that Protector. I demand then that this letter be sent to the new commission of twelve in order that the Assembly may avenge M. de Lafayette on the coward who hid under his name, and prove to the French people, by a new and great example, that it has not taken a vain oath in swearing to maintain the Constitution. For we have no Constitution, if a general can dictate laws to us."<sup>15</sup> The letter was sent to the committee to ascertain its authenticity.

In the state of feeling among the popular societies and the indignation of the leaders of the Left party, this letter only served to increase the irritation and to inflame the passions of the people. The Jacobins, fearing that Lafayette meditated striking a blow which would destroy their power, determined to strike the blow first and intimidate the constitutionalists and the king. Danton, who was the leader of the faubourgs and the great tribune of the people, and since the preceding December, member of the municipality, determined to strike by terror the person of the king and planned the insurrection of June 20th. During the time that the Assembly had been rent by party strife and passing decrees against the king, the populace of the working-class sections of Paris had been the object of an active propaganda in which the idea of a supplementary revolution had been advocated and a desire awakened for an equalising of social conditions. This, together with the news of the defeat of the armies, the dismissal of the ministers, and the rumours of the treason of the court, had all served to intensify the feelings of the people against the king. All the elements of discontent were ready to flame up in an insurrection, and Danton and his lieutenant, Santerre, the leader of the people in the faubourg of Saint-Antoine, selected the 20th of June, the anniversary of the taking of the oath at the Jeu de Paume, in 1789. The ostensible purpose of the insurrection was to plant a May-pole in honour of liberty on the terrace of the Feuillants; but the real purpose was to intimidate the king, and some even avowed the purpose of killing him.

The procession marched along the rue Saint-Honoré to the Assembly and after being held at the doors of the Assembly for

<sup>15</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XV, pp. 76-79.

some time, the people were allowed to present a petition at the bar wherein they stated their grievances. The orator of the deputation, after indicating their agreement with the Assembly, said, "The French people come to-day to present to you their fears and their anxieties; they lay down their fears in your midst and they hope to find at last the remedy for these evils. The executive power is not in agreement with you; and we do not seek any other proof of this than the dismissal of the patriot ministers. It is thus, therefore, that the happiness of a free people will depend upon the caprice of a King. But ought this King to have any other will than that of the law? The people think not. Such is their opinion, which may well weigh against that of crowned despots. A single man should not influence the wishes of twenty-five millions of men. If, out of respect, we maintain him in his position, it is on condition that he will fill it constitutionally. We complain of the inactivities of our armies; we insist on your discovering the cause; and if it proceeds from the executive power, we require that it should be destroyed."<sup>16</sup>

The president responded that the Assembly would give these matters consideration and urged the people to respect the law. The people then filed through the hall and gathered before the gates of the Tuileries which were closed. Threatening to break through, the gate was opened at the command of a municipal officer who had joined the people and they poured into the palace without opposition from the National Guards who had deserted their posts. They found the door into the main hall of the palace closed, but it was opened by the command of the king. The king retired into the embrasure of a window, protected by four national guardsmen and a few courtiers. The multitude, coming in, greeted the king with cries, "Recall your ministers. Send your priests away. Choose between Coblenz and Paris." To these demands the king replied, "This is neither the form in which you should demand it of me, nor the moment to obtain it." He displayed great courage in confronting the mob and won the admiration of the crowd by drinking a glass of water which one of them handed him. There were times when the life of the king was in danger and when the efforts of some ferocious men to strike the king were only parried by the bayonets of the soldiers. After some time, Vergniaud and Isnard, deputies from the Assembly, came over to protect the king, but their words had no effect upon the mob; finally Mayor Pétion arrived and induced the people to leave the palace. The insurrection failed

<sup>16</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XV, pp. 136-8.

in its purpose; for it did not obtain from the king any of its demands; but it served to destroy with the people the last glamour of royalty and prepared for the day when the people would return in force to overthrow the throne. The immediate consequences of the 20th of June were to arouse indignation among the constitutionalists and to produce a marked reaction in Paris and the departments in favour of the king. The violation of the palace, the indignities offered to the king, the illegal character of the petition presented by an armed multitude, became a reproach against the popular party. For a time they were put upon the defensive, and the constitutionalists might have succeeded in weathering the storm and putting the Constitution on a firm basis, if the king had co-operated in any of their plans; but the king refused all help from any of the constitutional leaders.

La Rochefoucauld, who was in control of a department of Paris, offered to bring the king to Rouen by the aid of the National Guard, and Lafayette came before the bar of the Assembly and defended his conduct and then offered the king the help of his army to take him to Compiègne. But the queen secretly frustrated the efforts of Lafayette to assemble the National Guard, sending private word to Pétion, the mayor, of the rendezvous. The queen refused all offers from the constitutionalists, putting her hope in the coalition army which was gathering at the frontier. The king had been rather inclined to be saved by his generals and the army; but the queen recognised that to be saved by Lafayette meant to accept the Constitution; and that involved a limitation of the royal power. Although this plan was warmly advocated by Malouet and Clermont-Tonnerre, yet the queen could not be moved from her resolution to abide at Paris and await the army of the allies. Lafayette returned to his army, having lost both his popularity and his prestige. Now events moved rapidly. News arrived on July 2d that the army was defeated and had retired upon Lille. This defeat increased the mistrust of the king and suspicions grew of his treason. Vergniaud on the next day exposed and denounced the treasons of the king and moved for his dethronement. In a great speech, he unveiled the state of the army, the vacillations and delays of the king, the conspiring émigrés at Coblenz and the king's neutrality, proving his "treason towards France." "What is the strange situation in which the National Assembly finds itself? What fatality pursues us, and marks each day with events which, bringing disorder into our labours, casts us incessantly

into the tumultuous agitation of disquietude, hopes and passions? What a destiny is prepared for France by this terrible effervescence, in the bosom of which we should be tempted to doubt if the Revolution retrogrades or advances towards its term? I pass to another provisional measure which I believe it is necessary to take at this moment; that is that *the country is in danger*: you will see at this cry of alarm every citizen rally around you, the recruiting return to its first activity, the battalions of the National Guards completed, the public spirit reanimated, the departments multiplying their military exercises, the soil covered with soldiers: Call—it is time—call on all Frenchmen to save their country! Show them the gulf in all its depth; it is only by an extraordinary effort that they can clear it. It is you who should prepare them for it by an electric movement, which shall give a simultaneous impulse to the whole empire.”<sup>17</sup>

This speech of Vergniaud marked a new step in the progress of events. The idea that the country was in danger was taken up by the Assembly, formulated into a decree which was passed into law in July. This decree was not passed without strong protests by the constitutionalists as leading to a violation of the Constitution. In the meantime, the royalists and constitutionalists rallied again for the king, and the department of Paris, under the leadership of La Rochefoucauld and Roederer, published a decree suspending Pétion as mayor of Paris for his actions on the 20th of June. But the removal of Mayor Pétion had roused the people of the sections of Paris and the same evening they gathered around the Tuileries, crying, “Return Pétion to us! Down with the directory. La Rochefoucauld to Orleans.” The King had approved the removal, but had left the final decision of the question to the Assembly, and it decided to restore Pétion to his functions. On July 11th, the Assembly passed the decree that “the country is in danger” and at the same time addressed an appeal to the army and to all Frenchmen. This had the immediate result of kindling the spirit of patriotism and creating an exaltation of mind and heart among the people which awakened anew revolutionary sentiments and prepared them for the second Revolution. The *Révolution de Paris* expressed the general feeling when it wrote: “The National Assembly has at last pronounced this terrible formula, this appeal to the courage of the people: Citizens, the country is in danger. The country will not be in danger—if the legislative

<sup>17</sup> Lamartine, “History of the Girondists,” Vol. II, pp. 23-5.

body can seize the dictatorship, and, without regard to the Constitution, nullify the vetoes placed on its decrees, suspend the nobles from their functions, and name patriotic generals. The country is in danger, the people are in insurrection—France has only two dangerous enemies, the King and Lafayette; and Lafayette will be no more if the King is beaten. Louis XVI will be either driven from the throne forever, or at least suspended from his functions during the war! We should speak here of a great truth—it is that the legislative body, after having declared the country in danger, has no right to interpret this declaration; the people have retaken the sovereign authority; no human power can hinder them from going to the source of the evil.”<sup>18</sup>

The effect of this new policy and the appeal to all Frenchmen to enlist in the service of the country was immediately seen in the agitation which seized the sections of Paris. Some of the sections, especially that of the Théâtre Français, came with some of the municipal officers to demand that Mayor Pétion be restored to his office. After a hearing in which all the incidents of the 20th of June were considered, the Assembly voted that Pétion should return to his duties as mayor; but this was done only after his restitution had been demanded by the people. Danton, who had accompanied him to the general council of the commune when he had first been deprived of his office, had seen him come forth pale with fury and had escorted him to his carriage. Turning to the people, Danton cried out, “No, no, virtuous Pétion, the people will sustain you. People, they wish to tear from you, your friend.” To this appeal there was no immediate response, but the next day the people rallied to their leaders, and gathering in large crowds at the Champ de Mars, on the anniversary of July 14, 1789, they greeted the king and the Assembly with cries of “Pétion or death.”

The restoration of Pétion to the mayor's office disconcerted the plans of Lafayette to save the king and filled the Girondists with a new fear of the people. Events now moved rapidly. Danton in an alliance with Pétion prepared the plans for an insurrection, and on July 18th, Pétion arranged at the Hôtel de Ville a central bureau of correspondence between the forty-eight sections.

The effect of the decree that “the country is in danger” had even greater influence upon the departments. All citizens capable of bearing arms were put in a state of permanent activity. From one end of France to the other, volunteers were enrolled

<sup>18</sup> Buchez et Roux, “Histoire Parl.,” Vol. XV, pp. 361-63.

in the army and the National Guards of each town and district selected those who should go forward to the army. Every one was obliged to wear the national colours of the cockade. In the emergency of the common danger, the Assembly was forced to call all men to the colours. On the 25th, the Assembly decreed the permanence of the sections of Paris and allowed them to organise the executive power. The distinctions of "active" and "passive" citizen were broken down for the army and it was decreed "that all Frenchmen who have received wounds in the service which shall make it impossible for them to continue in it, shall enjoy if twenty-five years of age, or upon attaining that age, the rights of active citizens, as if they had served for sixteen years, in conformity with the decree passed by the National Constituent Assembly."

This was a long step in the direction of universal suffrage and had consequences in the decrees passed in the next few days at Paris. The city was becoming more and more agitated and the sections became more threatening in their attitude towards the king, and the Girondists feared a Jacobin uprising. At this moment, the news of the manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick arrived and sealed the fate of the monarchy. It was a letter so threatening in its character and so full of menace that it produced an effect contrary to that which its authors had anticipated. Its first result was to hasten the preparations for a rising and some sections of Paris immediately voted for the dethronement of the king. This manifesto is so important in the steps which led to the overthrow of the monarchy and later to the institution of the Terror, that its language should be carefully considered, especially that portion which concerned Paris. "The city of Paris," the manifesto reads, "and all its inhabitants without distinction are required to submit immediately and without delay to the King, and to set that Prince at full and entire liberty, and to ensure to him as well as to all the Royal personages the inviolability and respect which the law of nature and nations renders obligatory on subjects towards their sovereigns. Their Imperial and Royal Majesties holding personally responsible with their lives, all that may happen, to be tried militarily and without hope of pardon, all the members of the National Assembly, of the department, of the District, of the municipality and of the National Guard of Paris, the Justices of the Peace, and all others whom it shall concern. Their said Majesties declaring, moreover, on their faith and word as Emperor and King, that if the Palace of the Tuileries is forced or

insulted, that if the least violence, the least outrage, is offered to their Majesties, the King and Queen, and to the Royal Family, and if immediate provision is not made for their safety, preservation, and their liberty, they will take an exemplary and ever-memorable vengeance by giving up the city of Paris to military execution and total destruction, and the rebels guilty of outrages to the punishments which they shall have deserved. Their Imperial and Royal Majesties on the other hand promise the inhabitants of the city of Paris to employ their good offices with his most Christian Majesty to obtain pardon for their faults and misdeeds, and to take the most vigorous measures for the security of their persons and property, if they promptly and strictly obey the above injunctions.”<sup>19</sup>

This manifesto was an endeavour to overawe Paris by the threat of terror, and terror to be carried out by the most ruthless of foreign foes, the Prussians. There was no note of mercy or any suggestion of a compromise on the lines of the Constitution, only the demand for absolute submission and a return to the old régime.

All during July, the departments in the South-east and South had been fermenting with republican ideas and many of them had sent petitions to the Assembly urging the dethronement of the king. The city of Marseilles was the hotbed for these radical ideas and voted for dethronement and a republic. The city selected five hundred young men of good families and sent them to Paris to support their ideas and sustain the Assembly. The march of the “Marseillais” became famous and decisive for the Revolution. They set out singing as they went the “Hymn of the Marseillais,” awakening the spirit of patriotism in the towns and villages through which they passed. A journal has left us this record of their journey: “They made this warlike air resound in all the villages they passed through, and in this way these modern bards inspired the countryside with civic and warlike feelings.”<sup>20</sup> They arrived in Paris on the 30th of July; there they joined the other federates who had come from the other departments for the anniversary of July 14th, and they formed the centre around which the revolutionary spirit of Paris gathered. The Jacobins took them in hand and lodged and feasted them. They won them over to their policy and enlisted them in the service of the insurrection. On July 23d, after the news of the manifesto, the federates sent a petition to the Na-

<sup>19</sup> Thiers, “French Revolution,” Vol. I, p. 361.

<sup>20</sup> Aulard, “French Revolution,” Vol. II, p. 47.



tional Assembly in which they demanded the suspension of the king and the convocation of the primary assemblies, "in order to determine by a certain and immediate method the will of the people," and to "nominate a National Convention in order to pronounce upon certain so-called constitutional articles! If you prove to the nation that you are impotent, the nation will only have one resource: to employ its whole strength in crushing its enemies itself." <sup>21</sup>

On July 30th, the section of the Théâtre Français under the leadership of Danton adopted a policy which was far reaching in its effects and gave a new character to the Revolution. It was nothing less than the adoption of the principle of universal suffrage and making the Commune of Paris representative of the masses of the people. The decree reads: "That the country being in danger, all Frenchmen are called to defend it, that the citizens vulgarly and aristocratically known under the name of passive citizens are Frenchmen; therefore they should and they are called to take arms in the service of the national guard, as well as to deliberate in the sections and in the primary assemblies. Consequently, the citizens who formerly composed exclusively the section of the Théâtre Français, declaring boldly their dislike for their ancient privilege, call all Frenchmen to them who have a domicile wheresoever in the region of the section and permit them to share with them in exercising the portion of the sovereignty which belongs to the section, to regard them as brothers, fellow-citizens, alike interested in the same cause and as necessary defenders of the Constitution, the declaration of rights, of liberty, of equality and of all the imprescriptible rights of the people and of each individual in particular." <sup>22</sup>

The other sections followed the example of the Théâtre Français with the result that the workers and the masses of the people took possession of the sections and overthrew the power of the bourgeoisie. Two days before, forty-seven sections out of forty-eight had pronounced the deposition of Louis XVI. On July 31st, the section of Mauconseil passed a decree that Louis XVI had not only lost the confidence of the nation but that the constituted powers had only the strength of public opinion, and that hereafter it would not recognise Louis XVI as king of the French and that it renewed its oath to live and die free. This declaration it decided it would present to the Assembly on August 5th. On the 4th of August, the Théâtre Français took a

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XVI, p. 250.

further step along the road of insurrection when it passed the decree abolishing the staff officers of the National Guards who supported the constitutionalists and the king, and voted that no chief of the National Guard could exercise any power except under a written statement of the civil authorities; that the number of the battalions would be reduced to the number of the sections and would be commanded by officers appointed by the sections. This was to put the control of the National Guards wholly in the hands of the people. The municipality under Pétion had authorised, on August 2d, the sections to assemble to consider the questions of reducing the battalions to the number of the sections, each section to name its own officers, adding "the suppression of all prerogatives and distinctions accorded exclusively to certain companies, as being contrary to the right of equality which belongs to all the citizens."<sup>23</sup>

The Assembly, however, had taken no action in relation to pronouncing the depositions of Louis XVI, and on August 3d, Pétion, in the name of the commune of Paris, came to the bar of the Assembly and demanded that it declare the downfall of the king; but the Assembly refused to take any action. On the next day, the section of Gravilliers sent a deputation to the Assembly making the same demand and saying, "The mayor of Paris explained to you yesterday at the bar the crimes of Louis XVI. Thirty thousand citizens of the section of Gravilliers have voted with full knowledge of the case, at three different times, always with unanimity, for the downfall of the King. Already this vote has been repeated by forty-six sections of the capital. We demand that you immediately put in action an accusation against Louis XVI. We leave to you still, legislators, the honour of saving the country; but if you refuse to do it, it will be necessary for us to take the part of saving it ourselves."<sup>24</sup>

The Assembly did nothing. Then the federates in conjunction with the sections of Paris, began to organise the insurrection for the overthrow of the king. This movement then was not that of Paris alone, but Paris working in co-operation with the patriots from the departments and representing the nation. At this time, Danton secured the transfer of the Marseilles from their quarters in the Saint-Antoine to the left bank of the Seine in the district of the Cordeliers where they would be in a strategic position for an attack upon the Tuileries.

<sup>23</sup> "Histoire Parl." Vol. XVI, p. 254.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, p. 324.

Meanwhile what was the attitude of the Assembly? It was still striving to come to some arrangement with the king. At the end of July, the Girondist leaders, Vergniaud, Guadet, and Gensonne, in a secret interview with the king, urged him to reconcile himself with the Revolution and select a Jacobin ministry; but without success. The petitions for the dethronement continued to pour into the Assembly and it became evident that public opinion was moving in this direction. On July 26th, Brissot, amid murmurs from the gallery, said that the nation was not ready for the dethronement and that it would provoke civil war. He demanded a discussion of the issue during which he said, "If this party of regicides exists, if there are men who would be capable of establishing the republic now on the wreckage of the Constitution, the sword of the nation should descend upon them, as upon the active supporters of the proposal for two chambers, or the counter-revolutionists of Coblenz."<sup>25</sup>

It was evident that the Assembly was still hoping to solve the problem by some accommodation with the king and it feared the consequences of acting on the petitions for dethronement. Nevertheless it did not hesitate to declare the petition of the commune as represented by Pétion, in reference to the downfall of the dynasty, "should be returned to its authors as null and unconstitutional." But that the Assembly was hesitating between two opinions is seen by its actions on August 6th, when it received with favour a petition from the general council of the Department of the Meuse which demanded punishment for those who advocated dethronement, and on the same day decreed the honours of the sitting to Varlet and the petitioners of the Champ de Mars who demanded dethronement and universal suffrage. But on August 8th, this policy of vacillation ceased and the Assembly voted that there was no ground for the impeachment of Lafayette by 406 to 224 votes. This was the signal for the insurrection. The leaders of the people, seeing that they had nothing to hope from the action of the Assembly and that it was determined to maintain the king in power, proceeded to assemble their forces for the attack. This took place on August 10th and an armed force attacked the Tuileries. The king had for his defense about six thousand men, including 700 of the Swiss Guard; but he failed to take the lead in the crisis and went with the royal family to the Assembly for protection, leaving the soldiers without orders. The National Guards who were favourable to his cause withdrew before the attack and the Swiss and

<sup>25</sup> Aulard, "French Revolution," Vol. II, p. 65.

the courtiers made a gallant defence of the Tuileries, but, in the midst of the conflict, the king sent word to cease firing and a large number of the Swiss were massacred. The victory of the people had not been obtained without considerable loss and this left behind a bitterness of feeling which later led to the popular demand for the execution of the king.

While the conflict was in doubt, the Assembly took no action; but when the king entered the Assembly, Vergniaud addressed him, "Sire, you can count on the stability of the National Assembly; its members have sworn to die upholding the rights of the people and the constituent authorities!"

When it became known that the insurrection was successful, the Assembly decreed the taking of a new oath: "In the name of the Nation, I swear to the best of my ability to maintain liberty and equality, or to die at my post." It then proceeded to decree that—"the head of the executive power is provisionally suspended from his functions, until the National Convention shall have pronounced upon the measures it may think fit to adopt in order to assure the sovereignty of the people and the reign of liberty and equality."<sup>26</sup>

It decided that the king and his family should be held as hostages and the civil list suspended; but it had no idea of establishing a republic; for it voted that an extraordinary commission will, during the day, present a proposal for a decree concerning the nomination of a governor for the prince royal and also that the king should be lodged in the palace of Luxembourg. The commune, however, protested against this arrangement and demanded that the king should be sent to the Temple as a prisoner. The Assembly was forced to accede to this demand and the king and his family were carried to the Temple the next day.

The king being suspended, the Assembly now formed a provisional executive council of six members of which three were the Girondist ex-ministers, Roland, Servan, and Clavière. Danton was elected to the place of Minister of Justice by the largest vote. The Assembly had been much depleted and only 285 voted out of 745 members. The majority of the members had absented themselves through fear and had gone into hiding. The power had now passed from the Assembly to the commune of Paris, and Danton, the organiser of the insurrection and leader of the democracy, assumed the direction of affairs and by his audacity and by his strong personality overawed the ministry and held the Assembly at Paris during the panic at the end of

<sup>26</sup> Aulard, "French Revolution," Vol. II, pp. 69-70.

August. It was due to his genius that the allies were stopped at Valmy and that the Revolution ended in the triumph of democracy.

The interval between the 10th of August and the 22d of September when the National Convention met, was filled with alarm, fear, uncertainty, and terror. On September 2d, the coalition army took Verdun, and Paris gave itself up to terror. The prisons were full of royalists who had been arrested a few days before during the domiciliary visits in the search for arms and on rumours of a royalist conspiracy. In the fear that seized the city on the approach of the Prussians, the worst elements came to the front and Marat with some other scoundrels assumed authority at the Hôtel de Ville and organised bands of desperadoes for the massacre of the prisoners. Thus those deeds of horror were committed which stained the birth of the new republic. There was no justification for these massacres but the fear of a royalist uprising and the cry of the volunteers who were going to the front, that the royalists would massacre their families in their absence. The authorities seemed to be paralysed with fear, and terror was the order of the day. In such times the worst elements of the population come to the front and "good citizens are rendered powerless."

The National Convention, elected by universal suffrage, met on September 21st, and the same day it decreed the dethronement of the king, and the next day it voted for the establishment of the republic. This event was almost contemporaneous with the defeat of the coalition army at Valmy on September 20th. With the fear of the destruction of Paris removed, the Convention proceeded to organise its government and to appoint a committee to draw up a Constitution. Inevitably the Convention divided into two parties, and the Girondists secured a majority and organised it. The sections of Paris had returned twenty-four deputies who represented the Jacobins, among whom were Danton, Robespierre, and Marat. The conflict now begins between these two parties, a conflict which became more deadly as it went on and in which the social revolution was the dominating issue. The republic might have survived and had a peaceful development, if it had not been for the war. The war intensified the passions between the parties, delayed the acceptance of the Constitution, and ended by transferring the power from the Assembly to two committees, that of the Committee of Public Safety and of National Security which ended in establishing the dictatorship of Robespierre.

How this was achieved, we can best understand by tracing the development of the social revolution and the demands of the people that the spirit of equality should be realised in fact as well as in theory.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DEMOCRATIC FLOOD SWEEPS AWAY 'ALL BARRIERS': THE RISE OF SOCIALISM

ONE of the outstanding facts of the French Revolution is the close alliance between socialism and democracy. This relation has not received the attention which it merits. But it is this fact of the coincidence in the development of socialism and the rise of democracy which gives to the study of the origin of socialism its importance. At the outset, it must be recognised that at the period of the Revolution, socialism had not advanced to that conception of the socialist state which it attained under its apostles and leaders of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the word itself was not in use at this time. We find that socialism was first used in 1834 by Pierre Leroux in an article in the *Revue Encyclopédique*, entitled, "D'Individualisme et du Socialisme" in which he says, "1. The social conception subordinates the individual to the whole; 2. Socialism tends to the establishment of a larger solidarity between men."<sup>1</sup>

From that time it soon came into common use. In 1836, Louis Reybaud published an article, entitled, "Modern Socialists," in which socialistic ideas are clearly formulated; but these ideas of socialism go back in their origin to the Revolution. Indeed, all the germinal ideas of collectivism, socialism, and communism which afterwards arose with the expansion of democracy in Europe, had been advocated in some form at the period of the Revolution. That we may be able to measure to what extent socialistic ideas prevailed, let us accept as our standard either of the following definitions of socialism. The first is by Janet, a conservative writer and able critic of socialistic theories. "Socialism," he says, "is any doctrine which believes it to be the business of the State to correct the inequalities of wealth that exist among men, and to establish the equilibrium legally, by taking from those who have too much and giving to those who have not enough, and to do this in a permanent manner, and not merely in particular cases, such as that of general distress or public calamity."

<sup>1</sup> Isambert, "Ideas of Socialism in France," p. 209. Note.

The second is that of De Laveleye from his "History of Socialism," in which he writes: "First, every socialistic doctrine aims at introducing greater equality into social conditions; secondly, it tries to realise these reforms by the action of the law or the State."

Under these definitions we shall find that many of the teachings on the "agrarian law" and many other measures of the revolutionary government, tending towards equality, can be designated by the name of socialism. But we must be careful to draw a distinction between socialism and social reform. Many of the early leaders of the Revolution, who were animated with schemes for social amelioration and passionately devoted to ideas which tended to destroy existing inequalities, would have strenuously repudiated the plans of the socialists of 1793; but these early schemes looked often in the direction of socialism and prepared the public, later, to accept the more radical schemes.

One thing that becomes clear with the progress of the Revolution is that the growth of socialistic ideas keeps pace with the expansion of democracy. The French Revolution was a political and social upheaval of society, involving such tremendous consequences for the world that all its aspects cannot be considered in any general history of its development. This is largely because the men and the events, the personal rivalries of individuals and parties, the struggle between the king and the Assemblies, the tragic character of the king's death, the great events of the popular insurrections, overshadowed the ideas and opinions of the people—those ideas and opinions that made it impossible to arrest the Revolution at a certain stage and drove it on with irresistible force which was beyond the power of any man or group of men to control or direct. The new wine of democracy, fermenting in the minds of the masses, could not be contained in the old forms of the ancient régime. The forces of the people which were called into action by the emergency of the struggle for liberty on the memorable day of the 14th of July, 1789, once awakened, could never again be brought under control.

At each stage of the Revolution and at each step in its advance, it was the insurgent people who led the van and imposed its will upon the king first, then on the Assembly, then on the Gironde, and finally upon the Jacobins. Again and again the different leaders of the parties tried to arrest the Revolution when it had realised their principles, but the force of the new ideas, the power of the new democracy, led and inspired by the clubs



and Commune of Paris and supported by the workers and peasants throughout France, forced the hand of the leaders and compelled them many times to go beyond their principles and designs. In the constant bidding of the leaders for popular support in their conflict with the king, and later in their conflicts with each other, the will of the people became the terrible engine in forcing the Revolution onward. That which we see so clearly to-day was not so evident to the men who were contemporaries of the events.

The genius of the Revolution was revealed and its fundamental principles formulated when the Constituent Assembly decreed the Declaration of Rights on August 26, 1789. The danger of the Declaration was recognised at the time by the more thoughtful members of the Assembly, but the enthusiasm of the moment overruled the judgment of experience. Henceforth the Declaration of Rights became the charter of liberty and equality, and all the ideas of democracy and socialism which developed, later, derived their inspiration and sanction from its first principles. When the Assembly made the Constitution in violation of these principles and organised the government on the basis of the bourgeois class, the principles of the Declaration of Rights were turned against them. The Assembly had called the democracy into life and being; and it is in the nature of democracy that its forces, once awakened, go on to their logical issue. De Tocqueville has called attention to the virile power of democracy, and this power is a striking phenomenon of the Revolution and a marked feature of its development in the nineteenth century.

Not only were the ideas of democracy embodied in the Declaration of Rights but also the germs of socialism; these were latent in its first article, which reads: "All men are born and remain, free and equal in rights; social distinctions cannot be founded but on common utility." And to this article, the advanced men of the Revolution appealed in justification of their democratic and socialistic principles and their appeal found an echo in the hearts of the people.

Are we justified, then, in saying that socialism began to appear at the time of the Declaration of Rights? By no means. The men of the Constituent Assembly were satisfied simply with giving expression to general principles and had no intention of applying them to practical politics. The Revolution had not yet reached the stage when socialistic ideas could obtain a hearing. Later the dissatisfaction of the people and the force of events will lead the more advanced patriots to "lift the veil," as they

said at the time, and to seek in the principles of the Declaration of Rights support for their theories and justification for their actions; but the time is not yet.

Nevertheless socialistic ideas were in the air. Many of the pamphlets which were published during the elections to the States-General had a strong tinge of socialism in the measures urged to destroy inequalities. Speculative theories of socialism appealed to a large number of men. At the time of the elections at Paris, Lambert published a pamphlet on the "*Cahier des pauvres*" and tried to induce the Tiers Etat to give to the poor workingmen representation in the elections. In this he said, "If it is demonstrated, if it is evident that the powerful and the rich have less need of society than the poor, then it is for the feeble, the poor and the infirm that society is formed, and that finally, it is one of the fundamental clauses of the compact of society to preserve every individual from hunger, from misery, from death which pursued him. I shall not only ask why there are so many unfortunate people, but I shall ask why they are not considered among us as men, as brothers, and as Frenchmen. Why is this immense class of daily labourers, of wage-earners, of men without wages, on whom are laid all the physical and political revolutions, this class who have so many complaints to make . . . why is it rejected from the bosom of the nation? Why had not this class its own representatives? Why is this Order, which in the eyes of grandeur and opulence, is only the last, the fourth of the Orders, but which, in the eyes of humanity, in the eyes of virtue as in the eyes of religion, is the first of the Orders, *the Sacred Order of the Unfortunates*; why, I say, is this order, which having nothing, pays more, in proportion, than all the other Orders, the only one which in conforming to the ancient, tyrannical customs of the ignorant and barbarous ages, is not called to the National Assembly and towards which contempt is, I dare to say, equal to the injustice."<sup>2</sup>

It was this great class of workingmen and the poor who had found a champion; and as their voice becomes articulate, the Revolution moves forward with a momentum which sweeps away all the old usages and barriers of society. The conditions and sufferings of the poor had been the theme of many men in the upper classes of society before the Revolution, and especially by those who speculated upon the regeneration of society. Indeed, we may say that these speculations dominated the minds of the men of action who led and sustained the Revolution in

<sup>2</sup> Chassin, "*Cahiers de Paris*," Vol. II, p. 584.

its later stages. The men who worshipped Rousseau as a prophet and who lived in close touch with the suffering poor, could not but be in sympathy with measures which deprived the rich to maintain the poor. These men, imbued with the socialistic ideas and speculations of the philosophers of the eighteenth century, were pushed on later to the realisation of their theories by the pressure of the people among whom the ideas of a better social system had taken a deep root. It was in the Commune of Paris and the 40,000 communes of the provinces, which had gradually passed from under the control of the bourgeois class in 1793, and had been taken possession of by the people, that the demand came to organise the state along socialistic lines. To trace this development in the direction of socialism is to find in the Revolution the forces which drove it onward; for the socialism which culminated in the triumph of the Jacobins in 1793 did not arise suddenly, but was the result of the slow development of ideas and events which later emerged, and whose significance was not clearly discerned at the time. Moreover, it was not alone ideas, but the emergencies of the Revolution—the threat of famine, the crash of antagonistic interests, the conflict of personal ambitions, the needs of finance, the civil and foreign war, the desire to enlist the peasants and workers on the side of the Revolution—all of which combined to lead the Assemblies and the Convention to pass socialistic legislation.

Thus, in November 1789, the demand to finance the Revolution led the Constituent Assembly to take the first step in the direction of socialism when it decreed that the wealth of the clergy should be appropriated for the use of the state. Mirabeau had supported this seizure when it was first proposed in the preceding August and had exclaimed, "I know only three ways for existing in society: by being a mendicant, a thief, or a hireling. The property-owner himself is only the chief of hirelings. What we commonly call his property, is only the price which society pays to him for the distributions which he is entrusted to make to other individuals, through his consumption and his expenses; the property-owners are the agents, the stewards of the social body."<sup>3</sup>

This seizure of the wealth of the clergy amounted to more than two billions of francs. In compensation to the clergy for dispossessing them, the Assembly voted that their salaries should be paid by the state. The grounds for this act of appropriation were first that the wealth of the church was not considered as

<sup>3</sup> Isambert, "Les Idées Socialistes en France," p. 33.

private property, but a trust given to the clergy for the public good; secondly, that the state had always considered the wealth of the church as a trust and had exercised control over its distribution. But at this time, the danger of this step and its ultimate effect upon the rights of property were recognised by some men in the Assembly. It is true that the criticism came from the extreme Right which protested against the seizure on the ground of confiscation. Abbé Maury held that "It would legalise all the insurrections of the agrarian law." Cazalès told the Assembly, "You pretend to place your decrees on the basis of law; you decorate them with pretexts of public utility. Those capitalists are insane who press your measures with such manœuvres. They think of all property as it affects them and that when they rob one, they are ready to rob all."<sup>4</sup>

The animus of these protests was to disgust men with the Revolution when they saw it attacking property; nevertheless they were in a measure justified. While it was a maxim of the old régime that the state was justified in taking property on the ground of public safety and necessity, yet the decree of the Assembly was the entering wedge driven into the idea of the sacredness of property. Its action furnished the precedent which radical men would seize upon later when they came to control the government.

Under the emergencies which each stage of the Revolution created, each group was led by public necessity to confiscate property and the ground was prepared for the introduction of socialistic measures. Moreover, with the spread of democracy and with the growing demand of the people to share in the benefits of the Revolution and enjoy a greater equality in social conditions, the drift towards socialism increased and the leaders of the Revolution could no longer resist the pressure of the people in this direction. Once the people had come to power, it was natural that this power should be used for their benefit; once they had obtained equality of political rights, it was natural that they should press on towards equality in social conditions.

At what time, then, in the Revolution did the spirit of socialism begin to appear? About the end of 1790, we find a certain school of writers who endeavoured to popularise socialistic ideas at Paris. These ideas, however, did not originate with the men of this school; they were only the disciples of the great masters of social philosophy and made the ideas familiar to the man on the street. The origin of socialism goes back to the great

<sup>4</sup>Lichtenberger, "Le Socialisme et la Révolution Française," p. 64.

writers and thinkers who had formulated its principles many years before the Revolution opened.

The age before the Revolution in France was not only an enlightened, but a humanitarian age. If there was one thing which characterised it above all others, it was its spirit of humanity and its sensitiveness to human suffering. These feelings and sentiments were a marked feature in all the writings of this period. It was not the sentiment of a few isolated thinkers, but the universal sentiment of the educated classes. The possessing classes had a profound pity for the unfortunate and the poor. Nothing is more common than to find among the enlightened noblesse as well as among the writers of the time a deep sympathy for the disinherited and oppressed classes. Their attitude towards social reforms is strikingly similar to the spirit of our own age towards socialism. This sentiment evoked a passion for equality in multitudes of men and created a demand for the destruction of all inequalities.

A study of the cahiers, or complaints, which were sent up to the States-General in 1789, makes it very clear that something must be done to relieve the burdens which pressed so hard upon the people. Amid all the diversities in the cahiers, there runs like a golden thread the thought that the new era, which was dawning with the opening of the States-General and upon which men founded so many hopes, would usher in an age when the most glaring inequalities would be abolished.

The effect of the critical and political writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau had been to change men's point of view upon man and society, government and religion, property and the rights of man. They had not only prepared the way for the Revolution, but they had created the Revolution in the minds of men. Under their leadership, a change in the form of government and a transformation in society was inevitable. Discontent with the existing state of affairs was awakened among all classes; but that which aroused the greatest enthusiasm and had the widest acceptance were the criticisms founded upon humanitarian sentiments. The degradation of the peasantry under the feudal system, the oppression of the people under heavy taxation, the suffering of the masses under famine and want of work, awoke a profound pity and roused the spirit for social reform. It was under the deep sympathy for the sufferings of the masses that socialistic ideas were born.

We find traces of it in such statesmen as Necker, and writers as Linguet; among writers of politics as Montesquieu and Vol-

taire and Rousseau; above all among the communistic writers, Mably and Morelly. And their ideas moulded and shaped opinions so that the demand for social reforms became as strong as that for political reform. Thus we find that the right to work, the right to subsistence, the progressive tax, the law of the maximum applied to grains, were advocated before the Revolution—ideas and principles which form part of the programme of modern socialism.

It is Montesquieu who writes: "Personal wealth has increased because a part of the citizens have been deprived of necessities; these then must be returned to them." Again, "the State owes to every citizen an assured subsistence, food, suitable clothing, and a manner of life which will not affect their health."<sup>5</sup>

Rousseau has said: "When the poor have desired wealth, the rich have promised to feed all those who have not enough to exist, either by charity or by work." "It is to equality that nature has attached the preservation of our social faculties and happiness; and from this I conclude that legislation will only be taking useless trouble, unless all its attention is first directed to the establishment of equality in the fortunes and conditions of citizens."

Again, "What miserable folly, that persons who pass as philosophers should go on repeating after one another that without property there can be no society. Let us leave illusion. It is property that divides us into two classes, rich and poor; the first will always prefer their fortune to that of the State, while the second will never love a government or laws that leave them in misery."<sup>6</sup>

In his "Code de la Nature," Morelly wrote, "Nothing belongs wholly to any one. Poverty is detestable, and any one who attempts to re-establish it should be imprisoned for life, as a dangerous madman, and an enemy of humanity. . . . Every citizen should be kept, maintained, and supplied with work at the public expense. All produce should be gathered into public garners, to be distributed to the citizens for their subsistence. All cities should be built on the same plan; all private residences should be alike. All children should be taken from their families at five years of age and educated together on a uniform plan."<sup>7</sup>

Such, then, was the background of thought and opinion which exercised such immense influence upon the men of the Revolution.

<sup>5</sup> "De L'Esprit des Lois, VII, c. IV, p. 94; XXIII, c. XXIX, p. 401.

<sup>6</sup> Morley, "Rousseau," p. 185. Quoted.

<sup>7</sup> De Tocqueville, "Old Régime," p. 199.

By their preaching against inequality, by their denunciation of wealth, avarice, and greed, they prepared men's minds for the measures which strike at the root of all property. And the measures which they advocated to diminish inequality like the progressive tax, the law of the maximum, the abolition of feudal rights, the necessity of providing work and subsistence for the people, were all used at some stage of the Revolution.

The desire to establish equality or to diminish inequality was the dominating passion of the Revolution. It was shared by men of all parties and entered into their legislation. It was this passion which found expression in the two great decrees, passed in August 1789; the one in the decree abolishing feudalism; the other, in the decree of the Rights of Man. These decrees were passed at the high tide of popular enthusiasm and raised the hopes of the nation to the highest pitch. It seemed then that all inequalities were in the way of being abolished. But when the reactionary spirit began later to gain the ascendancy in the Assembly, when the masses began to understand that these decrees were nothing more than a declaration of abstract principles; when no hope was held out to the people, of carrying them out in practice; when the state was being organised in violation of the decrees, then socialistic ideas began to make their appearance.

It was at this time that Abbé Fauchet organised public gatherings at the Cercle which attracted large numbers of people and discussed socialistic theories which bore a close relation to Christian socialism. In November 1790, he published some articles on this subject, in his newspaper, *La Bouche de Fer*, in which he wrote, "Everyone has a right to the land, and ought to have property in his domain; he takes possession of it by work, and his portion should be circumscribed by the rights of his equals. All rights are in common in a well-regulated society. The divine power of the sovereignty should draw these limits so that every one would have something and none have too much." "Every man has a natural right to satisfy his needs." He also taught that land should be divided or in common and that the general principles of all good legislation should be, "all for the people, all by the people, all of the people"—phrases which Lincoln made famous in his Gettysburg address. "Good government," Fauchet added, "produces in every place public abundance; for every man is 'a born creditor of the State.'" It is interesting to note the means which he advocated to realise these new conditions. "It is necessary to put an end to the three

great sources of crime—extreme wealth, extreme misery, and, above all, idleness.” To combat these evils, he suggested creating workshops of charity and placing a value on uncultivated lands; these measures would check the last two evils; but to destroy the first, he advocated the agrarian law which, without injuring actual possessors, would limit in the future all fortunes from land to the amount of 50,000 livres of rent; but no limit would be placed upon personal property.<sup>8</sup>

These theories laid Fauchet open to the charge that he favoured a social revolution in the form of the agrarian law. But the Jacobins who did not care at this time to come under this charge broke with Fauchet and his school. At this stage of the Revolution, it was dangerous to be associated with any one who talked of an agrarian law. Fauchet, however, far from being an active revolutionist, was only a teacher of speculative opinions, and thought that these changes could be brought about by “progressive attempts.” He did not contemplate any immediate application of his principles to society. But under the stress of criticism, and possibly under the fear which the near vision of the approaching social revolution awakened, like so many other speculative socialists, he modified his views and united with the Girondist Party who became in the National Convention the champions of the rights of property. Nevertheless his teachings had had their effect upon many of the people of Paris and others took up his work and prepared the masses for the social revolution.

These ideas did not seem to have exercised any great influence at the time, and they were repudiated by the leaders of the Democratic party; but it is significant that socialistic ideas began to be preached among certain sections of Paris and gained adherents among many members of the club of the Cordeliers. With the increasing demand for political equality and universal suffrage of which Robespierre had made himself the champion and by which he had gained an immense popularity among the masses of Paris, there also appeared this demand for social equality. But among the members of the Constituent Assembly, these men who advocated theories of equality were looked upon as fanatics and were designated as brigands and anarchists. The striking thing, however, is that the promulgation of social ideas was coextensive with the rise of democracy.

After the flight to Varennes in June 1791, there was a great outbreak of democratic ideas and men talked openly of forming a republic; but when the bourgeois Assembly decided to restore

<sup>8</sup> Lichtenberger, “Le Socialisme et la Révolution Française,” p. 70.



the king to his throne, they came into conflict with the democratic masses and were forced to fire upon them at the Champ de Mars, July 1791. With the disappearance of democracy, socialistic ideas also disappeared; but they emerged again when democracy revived in the spring of 1792 and the foreign war brought all the turbulent elements in Paris to the surface and the sections were invaded by the passive citizens.

The leaders of this movement were Varlet and Fournier, who held that the Revolution had not gone far enough and who attacked the National Assembly. Varlet was heard to say that "in other days despotism was in the palace of the kings, to-day it is in the palace of the laws." This revival of socialistic propaganda and the fear of the agrarian law so terrified the bourgeois class that, to calm their fears as to the rights of property, Danton proposed in the first days of the Convention, September 22, 1792, this decree: "All properties, territorial and industrial, should be retained by their owners." This decree was received with approbation, and, after some discussion, it was decreed, "That persons and property are under the safeguard of the nation."

In view of the Prussian invasion, it was a matter of supreme importance to rally to the government and the Convention all the forces of the nation; but when fear of the Prussian invasion had passed by the beginning of 1793 and the Convention began to consider the question of the Constitution, then socialistic ideas began again to appear. The price of provisions and the misery of many of the poor people in Paris had constantly raised the question of controlling the extortion of the profiteers and giving a greater equality of fortune to the people.

In sympathy with this spirit, Rabaut de Saint-Étienne, Protestant pastor of Nîmes, who had been a member of the Constituent Assembly and now associated with the Girondist party, published an article in the *Chronique de Paris*, January 1793, in which he demanded that the Revolution should go further and equalise social conditions, basing his appeal upon the Declaration of Rights. He held that the poor could not obtain this equality by force, that it is necessary to obtain it by laws, and to charge them with two things: 1. "To make the division of fortunes more equal. 2. To create laws to maintain it and to prevent future inequalities." Rabaut also held "that the legislator ought to attain his end by moral institutions, by exact laws on the amount of wealth which the citizens ought to possess, or by laws which will regulate its manner of use; (1), by rendering

superfluity useless to those who possess it; (2), by applying it to the advantage of those in need; (3), by turning it to the profit of society. The legislator can thus establish exact laws, on the maximum of fortune which a man can possess, and beyond which society can take its place and enjoy its right."<sup>9</sup>

Roederer answered him the next day in the *Journal de Paris*. He protested above all against the maximum, saying "that such a measure would not be for 'equality in abundance, in wealth, in general prosperity, but for equality in misery, for equality in famine, for equality in universal ruin.'" He closed his letter by calling Rabaut his "dear ex-colleague" and asked his pardon for bringing him so quickly to account.<sup>10</sup>

It was evident that Rabaut was not sustained by the Girondist party; but in spite of his aberration in the direction of socialism, he was elected president of the Convention the first week in February. When Marat heard of it, he said it was the result of a snap vote taken in the absence of the deputies of the Jacobins and due to the counter-revolutionary party.

But while Rabaut was not sustained in his opinions by the Girondists, yet conditions at Paris with the high price for bread and the famine among the people turned men's minds more and more towards this question. Early in February, the municipality came before the Convention to ask for permission to lay a progressive tax on the fortunes of the rich to provide money to buy bread for the poor. Cambon who made the report for the committee said, "The system of the committee is most just, for it offers to the unfortunate the relief which they claim, and makes the rich pay for the protection which the law affords them; it is most economical, for it does not empty the public treasury; it is most wise and most conforms to our principles, for it is by such measures that we realise the equality, which some men wish to consider as a chimera."<sup>11</sup>

Later in the month a deputation of the forty-eight sections of Paris came to the Convention, complaining of speculations in grain and the want among the people and urging the passing of more stringent laws. Marat denounced the petitioners as being instigated by the aristocrats who were exciting the people for their own ends. Still there was a party in Paris who represented the proletariat and stirred up the people to demand a social revolution. The leaders were Jacques Roux, Leclerc, and Varlet.

<sup>9</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XXII, p. 467.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467.

<sup>11</sup> Vol. XXIV, p. 246.

Their views were expressed by Varlet who wrote: "The right of territorial possession has limits in society; its limits must be such that commercial industry and agriculture will not receive any injury. In every State the indigent form the majority; and, as their liberty, their security and their individual preservation are goods, prior to all others, their most natural desire, their most universal right is to preserve themselves against the oppression of the rich, by limiting their ambition of acquiring wealth and destroying by just methods the enormous disproportion of fortunes. Wealth amassed at the expense of the public, by robbery, by stock-jobbing, by monopoly, becomes national property at the moment society acquires the evidence of extortion."<sup>12</sup>

These views of Varlet are of special interest because they represented the opinions of a large number of the workers of Paris who were agitating for a social revolution and upon whose support the Jacobins depended in their conflict with the Girondists. Marat and Hébert were allied with these men and were inciting the people against the rich and the monopolists who were making fortunes out of the necessities of the poor. These attacks led to the pillage of some bakers' shops; for this riot, Marat was accused by the Girondists and sent before the revolutionary committee. His acquittal was the subject of great rejoicing among the people and from that time dates the intensifying of the struggle between the Jacobins and the Girondists.

Another writer who advocated these views on equality was Billaud-Varenne whose influence grew with the progress of the Revolution and who later became one of the Committee of Public Safety. He published a pamphlet on politics in which he suggested the means to bring in the era of equality: "Different operations are necessary for attaining this result. The first is to declare that no citizen can possess henceforth more than a fixed quantity of land; and secondly, that laws should be passed which would limit the power to will away an estate and instead allow all to share equally in the property." The effect of his views was seen in the influence which he exerted later in the Committee of Public Safety, though they were not carried into effect by law. His ideas, however, had a profound influence upon the later development of socialism as Jaurés points out. "I shall say of his system that it was the supreme effort of socialism before it was transformed into communism. It prepared almost the complete absorption of inheritance to the profit of collectivism; and it is a view which has extended to all true socialistic systems,

<sup>12</sup> Aulard. "Histoire Politique de la Révolution Française," p. 450.

to Saint-Simonism and even as far as Marxism. When Marxism consented to seek the means of transition and application, when it showed how capitalistic property should be transformed into social property, it led to the provision that it will be wise to indemnify the actual holders and that it is a vigorous progressive tax on inheritance which will furnish the funds for this indemnity. The sole difference, and it is in the form rather than in the principle, is that Billaud-Varenne referred this instrument to an individual title, and that the Marxian evolutionist socialists, Vandervelde and Kautsky, referred it to the whole of the workers under the collective form."<sup>13</sup>

The agitation in favour of a social revolution became so great at Paris that the Girondists became alarmed. They had become the staunch advocates of the rights of property and denounced in the Convention the socialist teachers as anarchists and brigands. On the contrary, the Jacobin party, headed by Robespierre, relying on the Parisian populace for support in their struggle with the Gironde, inclined more and more to accept the demands of the people for a social revolution.

It was during this excitement over the spread of socialist ideas that Barère, on March 18th, denounced in the Convention, "the declarations against property that certain persons have been permitted to make," and blamed the propaganda of the agrarian law upon the priests and émigrés. To check this movement, he proposed to the Convention the following decree which was passed amid tremendous applause: "The National Convention decrees the death penalty against whosoever shall propose the agrarian law or any other law subversive of territorial, commercial, or industrial property." This decree, while it surrounded with such dreadful penalties all reference to the agrarian law, yet did not succeed in checking the spread of socialist ideas. The financial needs of the war, the danger from famine, and the sufferings of the people were a constant stimulus to the circulation of ideas on equality. At the same time that the decree against the agrarian law was passed, the Convention decreed the establishment in principle of the progressive tax on all property.

Nevertheless the *Révolution de Paris* did not hesitate to make this declaration: "In order to prevent too great inequality of wealth among republicans, all living in a state of equality, it is necessary to impose a maximum on individual fortunes, beyond which a man can acquire no more." And about the same

<sup>13</sup> Jaurés, "Histoire Socialiste de la Révolution," *Convention*, p. 1510.

time, the Department of Paris came to the Convention urging the fixing of a maximum. It was then that the leader of the deputation said, "We do not object to the right of property; but the right of property cannot be the right to starve the citizens. The produce of the land, as of the air, belongs to all men."<sup>14</sup>

It is very evident that the forces which directed the Convention at this time were not in itself, but in the people and the Commune of Paris. The bitter party controversies which developed between the Girondists and the Jacobins were determined by the ideas which agitated the sections and by the social theories which were in the ascendancy.

The force which drove the Revolution onward and led to the overthrow of the Gironde and the establishment of Jacobin supremacy, was the passion for equality and the demand for socialistic measures by the people. Historians have usually represented this struggle between the parties as the conflict between the ideas of Federalism as represented by the Gironde, and that of the unity of the country as symbolised in the dictatorship of Paris and represented by the Jacobins; but this is only to interpret the struggle by the slogans of the parties. The real struggle, in its intensity and in its deadly character, lay in the divergence of views as to the rights of property. While, as we have seen above, the Gironde had some members of the party who were inclined to socialistic ideas, yet they exercised little influence over the party as a whole. The Gironde were the representatives of the bourgeois class and stood in the state as the defenders of property. The last months of their rule in the Convention were characterised by an increasing fear of the Jacobins of Paris as exponents of the demands of the people for a social overturning. The leaders of the Gironde were not men with sufficient force of character to cope with the emergencies of the war on one side, or the insurgent people on the other. They were men of high ideals and beautiful theories of a republic governed by educated men, but men who looked upon the masses with disdain and had no real sympathy with their aspirations. They lacked the force of character necessary to men who would govern in such times and went down before the men of action who understood the drift of the popular movement and were ready to rise to power on the crest of its wave. It was inevitable that the clash of opinions in the Convention and the state of excitement in Paris would sooner or later bring

<sup>14</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XXVI, p. 52.

matters to an issue. The two protagonists of this conflict were Robespierre and Vergniaud. On April 5th, there was a great debate in the Convention at which the principles of the two parties were discussed by their champions. Robespierre began the debate and poured upon the Gironde all the accusations that his venom and hate could suggest; but he clearly stated the underlying differences when he said, "They have called all the friends of the country agitators, anarchists; . . . They have shown themselves clever in the art of covering their crimes, in imputing them to the people. They have early frightened the citizens with their phantom of an agrarian law; they have separated the interests of the rich from those of the poor; they have appeared to the first as their protectors against the sans-culottes; they have attracted to their party all enemies of equality. . . . Could they not count on the ascendancy which the faction exercised in the bosom of the National Convention? . . . Was it not this faction which sought to disgust the people with the Revolution by aggravating their misery; who repressed all necessary measures to quell the fury of stock-jobbing, to assure the public subsistence, to put a check on the excesses of monopoly?" Robespierre then went on to charge the Girondists with a conspiracy with Dumouriers having for its end to place Duc d'Orleans on the throne.<sup>15</sup>

To this speech, Vergniaud replied at length and revealed the true aim of his party when he said, "I know also that in revolutionary times there would be as much folly in trying to calm at will the effervescence of the people as in trying to command the waves of the sea to be tranquil when they are beaten by the winds. But it is the legislator who must prevent, as much as he can by wise counsels, the disasters of the tempest; and if, under the pretext of revolution, a patriot is a declared protector of murder and brigandage, I am a moderate. Since the abolition of royalty, I have heard many speak of a revolution. I say to myself, there are only two possibilities; that of property or the agrarian law, and that of restoring despotism. I have taken the firm resolution to fight the one and the other and all indirect means which would lead to it. If that is to be moderate, we are all summoned to this moderation; for we have all voted the penalty of death against every citizen who proposes the one or the other."<sup>16</sup>

The real conflict between the parties of the Gironde and the

<sup>15</sup> "Histoire Parl.," Vol. XXV, pp. 338, 354.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

Jacobins began when Condorcet brought before the Convention on February 16, 1793, the draft of the New Constitution in which the rights of property were strongly defended. At the same time, he laid stress upon the democratic character of its principles. He said: "The Constitution of England is made for the rich, that of America for the citizens in easy circumstances, the French Constitution ought to be for all men. The difference in time, in circumstances, above all in the progress of enlightenment, have led to this progression. In every free country, they have feared, and with reason, the influence of the populace; but give to all men the same rights, and there will be no populace."<sup>17</sup>

And Condorcet was justified in calling attention to the liberal character of the Constitution, which recognised so fully the rights of men. "Never has there existed a Constitution where equality has been so entire, where the people have conserved their rights to so great an extent."

Two articles in the Declaration of Rights were of especial interest:

Article I. "The natural rights, civil and political, of men, are liberty, equality, security, property, the social guarantee and the resistance to oppression."

Article XVIII. "The right of property consists in this that every man is his master to dispose of his wealth, his capital, his income, and his industry according to his will."<sup>18</sup>

This Constitution commended itself to the Convention, and if it could have been adopted, it would have given the Girondist party the supreme place in the nation. This is what the Jacobins dreaded above all, and from this time they commenced to adopt obstructive tactics to prevent the Convention from considering the Constitution. Robespierre, who always kept pace with the advance of public opinion and who feared the prestige which the Gironde might gain by formulating the Constitution, put himself in sympathy with the extreme sections of the populace and carried the Jacobin Club with him. At a meeting of the Jacobins on April 21, 1793, Robespierre proposed a modification of the Declaration of Rights, especially the article concerning property. His ideas were summed up in eight articles which clearly showed his leanings towards the socialist movement.

1. "Property is the right which each citizen has to enjoy and to dispose of his portion of wealth which is guaranteed to him by law.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XXIV, p. 103.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-8.

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2. "That the right of property as all others is limited, by the duty of respecting the rights of other people.

3. "It cannot be injurious to the security, nor the liberty, nor the existence, nor the property of us all.

4. "All possession, all traffic which violates these principles is absolutely illicit and immoral.

5. "Society is obliged to provide subsistence for all its members, either in procuring work for them, or in assuring the means of existence to those who are without work.

6. "Necessary relief to the indigent is a debt of the rich towards the poor; it belongs to the law to determine the manner in which this debt shall be acquitted.

7. "The citizens whose incomes do not exceed what is necessary to their subsistence are exempt from contributing to public expenses. The others must support the expenses progressively according to the extent of their fortune.

8. "In order that these laws may not be an illusion, and equality a chimera, society ought to pay salaries to the public functionaries and to do it in a way that citizens who live by their labour can assist at the public assemblies, where the law calls them, without compromising their existence or that of their families."<sup>19</sup>

The last article has its significance from the fact that it was the basis of the decree passed later by the Convention when the poor citizens who attended the sections were paid forty sous a day. This Declaration of Rights was passed unanimously by the Jacobin Club and ordered printed and sent to the affiliated societies.

Three days later, Robespierre read his Declaration of Rights before the Convention in which he said, introducing the first four articles on property, "You have multiplied the articles to assure the greatest liberty in the exercise of property, and you have not said a single word to determine its nature and legality: In the manner in which your Declaration has appeared, it is made not for men, but for the rich, for the monopolists, for the stock-brokers, and for tyrants. I propose to you to reform these vices in consecrating the following truths." He then read the four articles quoted above, and went on to advocate the progressive tax, saying, "is it not a most evident principle drawn from the nature of things and from eternal justice that those who impose upon the citizens the obligation to contribute to the public expenses, do it progressively according to the ex-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 94.



tent of their fortune; that is to say, according to the advantage which they receive from society.”<sup>20</sup>

The importance of these views of Robespierre lies in the effect that they had upon the opinions of the masses of Paris and the antagonism that was aroused among the property-holders and the party of the Gironde. It was the advocacy of the progressive tax and the forced loan upon the rich that brought on the crisis in May and led to tumultuous scenes in the Convention. As you read the accounts of this period, you can feel the throes of the fierce passions which were aroused and the deadly character of the struggle between the principles of the rights of property and the principles of socialism. While Robespierre said at this time when he introduced his declaration on property, “you ought to know that this agrarian law is only a phantom created by fools to frighten the imbecile,”<sup>21</sup> yet he said this because no one could advocate this law without incurring the penalty of death. While he repudiated the agrarian law, yet he laid down the principles which have been accepted later by the French socialists and made the basis of their propaganda.

It has been suggested that Robespierre proposed these ideas merely as a matter of political tactics in his bid for popular support in his conflict with the Girondists; for when he and his party had succeeded in discrediting the Girondists, we find them advocating a Constitution in June 23d in which the article on property was similar to that proposed by Condorcet in the preceding February. “The right of property is the right which belongs to every citizen to enjoy and dispose, according to his pleasure, his property, income, labour, and industry.”

But at the time of the conflict, Robespierre was forced to move along with the popular stream which was running strongly in the direction of socialism. Moreover, on the one hand, the stress of the civil war which had broken out on the expulsion and the arrest of the twenty-two leaders of the Gironde on May 31st to June 2d, had made it necessary to conciliate middle-class opinion and allay the fears of the property-owners who had benefitted by the Revolution; and on the other, the demands of the people were so insistent and the necessity of making them sharers in the benefits of the Revolution was so imperative, that the Convention was compelled to pass many measures which were marked by their socialistic character.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XXVI, p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

How far were these socialistic ideas applied in legislation and how far did the state go in the direction of socialism?

While the Revolution did not establish a socialistic régime, it carried the government a long way in this direction by its socialistic measures. We have seen how the socialistic agitators and writers prepared the minds of the people for this legislation and how their seizure of power after May 31, 1793, rendered it imperative that many measures should be passed which should diminish existing inequalities: for the driving force behind the Revolution was the passion for equality. The men who hesitated to carry out these measures were swept aside and their places were taken by men of action who were ready to legislate in the interest of the masses.

The first great measure of the new government was the abolition of feudalism. The demand for its abolition had been behind the Revolution from the beginning and had formed the basis of many of the cahiers which were sent to the States-General in 1789. Some of the expressions found in the cahiers drawn up in 1789, show how strongly the peasants felt on this question. We read: "All feudalism ought to be abolished and the names of vassal and seigneur between subjects of the King forever banished from judicial acts." . . . "All Frenchmen are nobles." Another peasant exclaimed, "I am no longer a serf, I am free; henceforth each citizen will count for a man." Thus claiming entire liberty for Frenchmen."<sup>22</sup>

The night of the 4th of August began the movement for the abolition of feudalism, but it was not consummated until four years later. While the decree of the 4th of August abolished all feudal rights in principle, yet it retained all those rights which related to property values in land. The decree read: "The National Assembly destroys entirely the feudal régime. Of the rights and duties, as much feudal as taxed, those who hold by real or personal mortmain and of personal servitude, those who represent them, are abolished without redemption; all the others are declared redeemable; the price and the mode of redemption will be fixed by the National Assembly; those which are not suppressed, will continue to be collected until payment."

Like so many decrees of the National Assembly, they served only to establish a principle, and then, from failure to pass laws making the principle effective, they succeeded only in awakening desires which they failed to satisfy. Had the Assembly passed laws to give this decree effect and had it

<sup>22</sup> Chassin, "Génie de la Révolution," pp. 171-2.

been less rigorous in dealing with feudal rights, the course of the Revolution might have been very different. As it was, the peasant risings continued to disturb the Constituent Assembly all through the two years of its sessions. Alarmed for the security of property, the bourgeois class proceeded to arm itself against the peasants and to put down the risings without mercy. The agitation still continuing and the peasants still refusing to pay dues of whatever kind, the Assembly in March and May, 1790, passed laws drawing distinctions between abolished and redeemable rights; but it was too late to check the movement among the peasants who gave little heed to these fine distinctions. In the meantime, opinion had so far progressed that there arose a demand for a more liberal administration with regard to feudal rights. The peasants were becoming more and more revolutionary and more antagonistic to the privileged classes. The march of the Revolution and the opposition of the émigrés made the peasants feel that those who demanded feudal dues were associated with those who would bring back the old régime. Under these circumstances, many of the advanced patriots felt that feudal rights must be dealt with in a more generous way. Constant complaints were sent up to the Assembly against the difficulties of redeeming the rights. But nothing was done until after the overthrow of the monarchy in August 1792. Then even this legislation carefully guarded the rights of property. Both the bourgeois Assemblies had maintained the distinction between feudal rights which were abolished and rights which were redeemable and these latter comprised the greater part of the lands. One reason for the instability of the governments was that the Revolution, up to this time, had done little for the peasants. During this period, they formed a seething mass of discontent which supported the advanced leaders who held that the Revolution was not finished. It was only when the Revolution had advanced to the stage where the government became the representative of the people, only when democracy had attained the power and asserted its authority in the insurrection of May 31 to June 2, 1793; only when the Girondist party had been driven from power and the socialistic movement gained ascendancy, that feudal rights were swept away and the peasantry delivered from the fear of the return to the feudal régime. This was accomplished by the decree of the Convention passed June 11th, by which all lands taken from the communes within the last two centuries, from 1669, had to be restored, together with unoccupied and marsh lands, and even lands which had heretofore

been held as sacred under a forty years' possession. These lands were to be held by the communes as their common possession or they could be divided under a vote of one-third of the inhabitants. But while in certain of the communes this division took place, yet most of the communes preferred to hold the lands in common for the good of all the inhabitants. By this system, every one had a right to the lands.<sup>23</sup>

This was a long step in the direction of abolition of feudalism, but feudal rights remained to be dealt with. On July 17th, the great law was passed by the Convention which destroyed entirely feudal rights. The decree reads: "All dues formerly seignorial, feudal rights, both fixed and casual, even those reserved by the decree of August 25th last, are suppressed without indemnity." The peasants could now obtain the land without any restrictions. No longer would they have to pay fines on sales or on inheritance, nor was there any "limitation on the right to sell the produce or any tribute out of the crops." All these taxes which had burdened the land and held the peasant in servitude were swept away.

Under the Directory when an effort was made to make the peasants pay the ground-rents in order to meet a deficit in the finances, it was estimated that the "ground-rents possessed by the State under the title of national wealth, represented a capital of 400 to 500 millions which deprived the Republic of 50 millions of revenue a year." It was not possible either under the Directory or the Consulate to disturb the owners in the possession of property acquired under the laws of 1793. These laws involved an immense transfer of property. It was in effect a great social revolution which was accomplished only after four years of agitation and after the people had attained power in the ascendancy of the Jacobins.

But for the agitation of the peasants, the work of the Revolution would probably never have been achieved. As Aulard says, "The important point of the economic and social history lies in the rural history of the French Revolution. Announced, proclaimed by the deputies of the Tiers Etat at Versailles, commenced by the Parisians who, bourgeois and workers, took the Bastille, the Revolution would perhaps have proved abortive, if the mass of the peasants had not taken part, . . . and had not defended, maintained, and developed this victory."<sup>24</sup>

There can be no doubt that the abolition of feudalism and

<sup>23</sup> Kropotkin, "The Great French Revolution," p. 423.

<sup>24</sup> Aulard, "Feudalism," preface, p. 1.

the transfer of these properties to the peasants was a form of state socialism. The taking over of the lands without redemption was a huge scheme of confiscation very much the same in character as would be realised if the modern state should take over industrial capital without compensation. For at that time, land formed the great basis of capital and was a vital factor in production. That such a scheme was possible to carry through, was not due to the fact that the leaders believed in the theory of socialism, but because the emergency of the foreign war in which the dispossessed classes shared the odium and hatred, and the necessity of the government winning over the mass of the peasants to the new régime, led the government to introduce the social revolution which in its measures went in the direction of socialism and in its logical consequences carried out the spirit of socialism.

The next great measure which pointed in the direction of socialism was the progressive tax. This tax had been advocated by Montesquieu as a means of equalising social conditions. He distinguished in the progressive tax between the necessary, the useful, and the superfluity. "The first," he thought, "ought not to be taxed; the second to be taxed; the third, to be taxed much more than the useful."<sup>25</sup> These principles were applied to the progressive tax during the Revolution. This tax in itself was not necessarily socialistic. It only became such when it was carried to excess and absorbed all income above a certain maximum which the state exacted on the ground that it was a superfluity.

Moreover, while the tax was levied at first merely as a provisional measure of public necessity and public safety, yet it soon came to be levied as a means tending to reduce the great inequalities of wealth. It was an easy transition from the principle of a tax for the needs of the state to a tax for the general good which would deprive the rich to meet the needs of the poor. The tax was first proposed at Paris in November 1792, as a local expedient to reimburse the state for the sums which it had advanced to the municipality of Paris to meet the expense of feeding the city. It was to be a tax on all incomes above 900 livres. On February 7, 1793, the municipality was authorised to impose a tax of the same nature on Paris. In the course of the debate of this question, Cambon said, "This system is the wisest, and the most consistent with our principles, for it is by

<sup>25</sup> Janet, "Histoire de la Science Politique," Vol. II, p. 388.

such measures that you bring about equality, which some men wish us to believe a chimera."<sup>26</sup> In making his report on the tax to the Convention, Ramel, in the name of the committee, proposed this decree which was passed: "The National Convention decrees as a principle that in order to attain to a more exact proportion in the taxes that each citizen must meet in accordance with his means, there shall be a gradual and progressive tax upon luxury and wealth, both landed and personal."

To be sure, this tax was only then decreed as provisional and as a war tax, but once the idea was introduced, it spread rapidly. Thus we find the Commune of Paris demanded a similar tax on March 9th and the department of Hérault desired the same tax in April. At this time the need for funds was enormous. The winter of 1793 was one of much suffering among the poor. Men were out of work and Paris was threatened with famine; speculators were making fortunes out of the necessities of the poor. Even though bread was sold at a fixed price and the municipality was spending vast sums to maintain the price, the people were compelled to stand in long queues at the baker shops to obtain it. Marat, inveighing against the rich and monopolists, had instigated a small riot by which the grocery and baker shops were pillaged. Besides, the socialist agitators like La Roux and Varlet were at work among the people who were clamouring for a more equal distribution of wealth.

Later in May, it was proposed to levy a fixed loan upon the rich to the amount of a milliard of francs. In the discussion, the Girondists, who were the champions of property, spoke in opposition. Nevertheless Rabaut de Saint-Étienne dissented from his party, saying, "We all agree that it is to the rich we must apply; no one denies that; it is the common wish." After the overthrow of the Girondists, the Convention decreed the forced loan of a milliard and also the progressive tax.

The nature of this tax was as follows: "Necessary incomes were exempt from taxation and were limited to 3,000 livres for married men and 1,500 livres for the unmarried; abundant incomes were subject to the progressive tax up to the maximum: above this maximum was the superfluity, all of which was taken by the State. It was said that the maximum of abundant incomes is fixed, for the father of a family, at 20,000 livres. The progressive tax reduces this to 12,813 livres. All surplus is levied for the loan, whatever amount the income may attain."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> "Histoire Parl." Vol. XXIV, p. 246.

<sup>27</sup> Aulard, "The French Revolution," Vol. III, p. 135.

But the Convention did not go so far at this time in adopting these recommendations of the committee, but was inclined to adopt the proposals of Saint-André who desired the tax to fall on those who were rich. Saint André urged that those should not be subjected to the forced loan of a milliard who, being married, enjoy an income of less than 10,000 livres, and who, unmarried, enjoy an income of less than 6,000 livres.<sup>28</sup> As it was found in August, that under this exemption, the loan would only yield about two hundred millions the Convention was forced to return to the original propositions

Whatever might have been the intentions of the Convention, the representatives on missions interpreted their powers in a large way. The necessities of the war and the need of supplying the soldiers with food, clothing, and munitions of war taxed the resources of the people to the utmost and the burden of these requisitions naturally fell upon the rich. The representatives commandeered all that was necessary for the army. The principle of the superfluity above the maximum furnished them with the pretext to take over all the property of the rich, especially of those whom they put in the class of the suspected and counter-revolutionary party. Besides they extended the principle so as to meet the needs of poor patriots, and in certain cities, they instituted a veritable socialist régime. The commissioners, Lebon and Carrier, encouraged the sans-culottes to seize the wealth of the rich aristocrats whom they held responsible for the dearness of provisions. They subjected them to levies to increase the pay of the soldiers; to pay for the maintenance of popular societies and municipalities; to furnish wedding portions for the daughters of the indigent; to maintain the churches and repair the roads. They held that it was necessary to "drive them from the protection of the Republic and to confiscate their wealth for the profit of the Republic." Thus at Marseilles, the representative sent forty-three scoundrels, as they called them, to the scaffold who had left the republic nearly thirty millions. At Vierzon, the commissioner established five categories of the rich who were taxed according to their ability; the idle sans-culotte formed the last class, and to furnish them with food, public granaries were established at many places where all the grain was brought and sold at a fixed price.<sup>29</sup>

In the Ardennes, where a socialist system was established, the following decree was passed: "The manufactories, the trades,

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup> "Le Socialisme et la Révolution Française," pp. 273-274.

the iron works, the tanneries of suspected men, which have not the same activity or which do not employ the same number of workmen as before the war are put under regulations and will be administered for the profit of the poor workmen."<sup>30</sup> If any are found who have become slack in their work, then their factories will be directed by two-salaried officials appointed by the commissioners. A complete system of taxation was imposed upon the rich and the proceeds were divided among the poor citizens according to their needs and the price of provisions.

But it was at Lyons that the principle of the new system was applied in all its rigour and a régime was set up which went as far as any in the direction of socialism. This was due, undoubtedly, to the fact that Lyons had been the centre of the royalist reaction and had withstood the armies of the Convention for more than four months. After its capture, the city was administered by the commissioners, Collot d'Herbois, Albite, and Fouché. The most rapacious of the commissioners was Fouché, who passed the most revolutionary decrees and at the same time satisfied his taste for rapine. The property of the rich was confiscated and the maximum was applied with excessive rigour. He exacted all the wealth above the maximum on the ground that it belonged to the superfluity. Fouché wrote to the committee at Paris from Nevers, "I send you 17 bags filled with gold, silver, and silverware of all kinds, taken from the spoil of the churches, the chateaux and also the gifts of the sans-culotte. I know not by what imbecile complaisance these valuables have been left in the hands of suspected men. Do they not see that this is the last hope of the evil-minded and the avaricious? We must debase the gold and silver, we must draw in the mud the gods of the monarchy, if we wish to make them adore the god of the Republic and to establish the austere virtue of liberty."<sup>31</sup>

Here, too, they established the régime of making the manufacturers responsible for the subsistence of the workmen, and if they failed in this, the manufacturers were held to be traitors to their country. The municipalities were ordered to cultivate the lands for the profit of the sans-culotte and at the expense of the rich. They decreed that "all the population with the exception of the mendicants and the idle, should be fed at the expense of the rich on whom a tax was levied in proportion to their fortune and lack of civic spirit." "They furnished to all

<sup>30</sup> "Le Socialisme et la Révolution Française," p. 274.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 275.



able-bodied citizens work and the objects necessary for the exercise of their trade." The wealth of all suspects was sequestered until the peace. The principle on which they acted was "Peace to the huts, war to the chateaux."<sup>32</sup>

Under this system, the great principles of socialism were applied in varying degrees; the right to work, the right to subsistence, municipal workshops, the progressive tax, the confiscation of wealth above the maximum. So successful was this system that Fouché was able to write to the Convention: "The opulence which was for so long a time and so exclusively the patrimony of vice and crime, is restored to the people. You are the dispensers. The properties of the rich Lyonnais conspirators acquired by the Republic are immense and they will bring comfort and ease to millions of republicans. Order promptly their division. Do not suffer the foolish rich to raise by scandalous sales the property of the sans-culotte—the patrimony of the friends of liberty. The public happiness is in your thought, in your resolutions, in your decrees. Do not do anything by half. Dare to realise it completely."<sup>33</sup>

The Commune of Paris was so enthusiastic over the administration of Fouché and his colleagues that it declared that "riches and poverty ought to disappear in a régime of equality."

The collectivist régime was established in other places like Brest and Arras, but enough examples have been given to show how far the revolutionary government went in the direction of socialism. To be sure, the demands of the public safety and the immense needs of the war justified these requisitions in the minds of the moderate members of the Convention; but this only served for the advanced men to put in practice their socialistic schemes and enrich themselves and win the applause of the people.

While at Paris the socialistic régime never attained the proportions which it did in the provinces, yet the need of feeding this large city and of keeping the workmen employed led to the application of the law of the maximum. To meet this constant outlay for provisions, funds had to be found and the progressive tax was the method by which the rich were made to supply the means to support the poor. The one anxiety of the leaders of the Convention was to keep Paris quiet. To this end they organised an army to seize provisions from the surrounding country, and to supply the means for the indigent to buy them,

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

and they allowed all good patriots forty sous a day. That the Convention did not supply a complete socialistic régime may have been due, first to the fact that they belonged to the bourgeois class and inherited all the prejudices of that class in regard to property; second, that under the needs of the foreign and civil war which was raging in France, it would be a serious matter to have attacked the property of the large class who had benefited by the Revolution and who, by such attacks, would have been thrown into the camp of the enemy. All they did, therefore, was to support measures which assured the subsistence of the poor and furnished the means for carrying on the war. In confiscating the wealth of the rich and the monopolists, they justified this measure as leading to greater equality and as depriving the forces of counter-revolution of the means for attacking the republic.

Nevertheless in their theories and their actions, they furnished the ideas and showed the method of socialism which later was taken up by the socialists of the nineteenth century and developed into a system which aimed to change the character of modern states.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RENAISSANCE OF DEMOCRACY: THE REVOLUTION OF 1830

WITH the downfall of Napoleon in 1814, the conservative forces of Europe believed that they had subdued the spirit of the French Revolution and crushed the despotism of French domination. At the Congress of Vienna, the representatives of autocracy controlled the deliberations of the "League of Nations" and the three monarchs of Prussia, Austria, and Russia, in conjunction with the British Foreign Minister, the reactionary Castlereagh, gave the law to the nations of Europe. The spectre of the Revolution seemed to have passed away and the ruling classes in all European countries believed that now they would enjoy a long period of quiet and peace. But the spirit of the Revolution could not be so easily exorcised from the minds of men. The principles of democracy and the new social order could not be exterminated on the field of battle. The Revolution had stamped these principles so deeply on the hearts of the people that they must spring into life and power again at the touch of the modern spirit. This was true in a larger degree in France than in any other country, except England. In France, the social structure of society had been so transformed and its institution so changed that the return of the king did not mean the return of the old régime.

When Louis XVIII was called back to the throne in 1814, he recognised that he must make terms with society in France which retained the social organisation of the Revolution and the centralised administration of the Empire. This meant that he must accept the principles of '89 and a form of government modelled after the constitution of England. He had guaranteed this form in the proclamation of St. Ouen, May 2, 1814. This involved a Liberal Constitution—two houses, a Senate and Chamber of Deputies, controlling taxation, and a responsible ministry; permanent judges; freedom of the press; guarantee of the national debt and ranks; liberty of creed and person; guarantee of revolutionary titles and the Legion of Honour, and a civil service open to all Frenchmen. These principles

were embodied in the "Charte Constitutionnelle," promulgated in June 1814.

Three questions remained undetermined and were left to be settled by the two houses: first, the responsibility of the ministry; second, the composition of the electoral body; third, the regulation of the freedom of the press. These questions gave rise to the strife of parties and their decision ultimately led to the Revolution of 1830.

The interval of the "Hundred Days" did not disturb these relations, and after the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo, the king returned to France to take up again the work where he had left it; but in re-establishing his power, he was forced to accept Napoleon's ministers, Talleyrand, Fouché, and Baron Louis, who controlled the government and were instrumental in his return. These ministers were the representatives of the bourgeoisie in whom the electoral power of the nation was centred. Under their régime, the greater part of the nation, including the manual labourers, artisans, peasants, small tradesmen, the lower officials, all the lower clergy, were excluded. Nevertheless Louis XVIII accepted in all sincerity the society of the Revolution, and the people, glad to escape from the turmoil of war, welcomed his return. The Chamber of Deputies was still that of 1814. But the "Hundred Days" had left its marks upon society. On the one side, the adherents of the imperialist régime, especially the soldiers and officers of the army of Napoleon, who were discontented with the new system and coalesced with the Republicans who were opposed to the monarchy. This party was strong in the cities among the liberal middle class and the workmen. "It was a military and patriotic party," writes Seignobos, "it appealed to the hatred of foreigners and to national honour; it reproached the Bourbons with having been 'brought back in the enemies' baggage,' with being foreign protégés, with being in league with the 'Holy Alliance, murderers of the people.'"<sup>1</sup>

On the other side, there was the party of the upholders of the Charter and the constitutional monarchy; but in this party there was an extreme element who were working for a counter-revolution and the restoration of the old régime. These attacked the Concordat and protested against the legality of the confiscated estates. This section of the Constitutional party soon became known as the Ultras, and, sustained by the presence of foreign armies, came into power and entered upon a course of revenge

<sup>1</sup> Seignobos, "Political History," p. 115.

through political prosecutions at Paris and massacres in the south of France. The new Chamber of Deputies was elected in August 1815, and had been increased by legislative decree to 402 members. The tricolour party had very few members and the constitutional supporters of the charter were in a minority, but the Ultras obtained a majority and at once began to pass laws against seditious writings, provost courts, and exceptions to the amnesty. These courts condemned men for seditious acts, and even for their utterances, without a trial by the jury which was presided over by five judges with a military officer at the head. They inflicted penal servitude upon every one accused of seditious writings and speeches. The Chamber of Deputies also voted a law of amnesty, but excluded from the effects of this law all the high officials of the "Hundred Days" and the Regicides, the deputies to the National Convention of 1793. These courts were guilty of excessive cruelty and allowed the royalists in the south of France to institute the "White Terror." In their zeal for reaction, the Chamber of Deputies proceeded to attack the institutions guaranteed by the charter, and voted to abolish the university, the national debt, permanent justices, and to restore the confiscated estates to their former owners; but in this purpose, they were frustrated by the House of Peers among whom were many of the old imperial officials and upholders of the new régime and the charter.

Then commenced the conflict between the Ultras and the king over the electoral system and responsibility of the ministers to the Chamber of Deputies. In the meantime the king had dismissed the imperial ministers, Talleyrand and Fouché, and had replaced them with a ministry drawn from the minority of the Chamber of Deputies under the presidency of the Duke of Richelieu, a friend of Czar Alexander. The majority protested against this ministry, as they desired a ministry which would possess their confidence in accordance with parliamentary rule. The king maintained his right to choose his own ministers and was sustained by the minority of the Constitutional party. This conflict between the king and the majority of the Ultras in the Chamber of Deputies brought to the front two opposing principles; namely, that of the constitutional king choosing his ministers without regard to the majority of the Chamber of Deputies and that of the government by the parliamentary majority. The Ultras, in their eagerness to seize the power to work their revenge, had raised an issue which was destined later to turn against them to their own ruin and destruction. For

the time being they were defeated, but they had inaugurated a principle which the Liberal party was quick to seize in their struggle with autocracy under Charles X. Royer-Collard, the leader of the party which supported the king, said at this time, "If the day should come when the government were in the hands of the majority of the Chambers and when that majority had the power to dismiss the King's ministers, then would come the fall, not only of the constitution, but of independent royalty; then we should have a republic."<sup>2</sup>

The king dissolved the Chamber of Deputies in September 1816, and by a royal ordinance changed the composition of the House, reducing the deputies to 258, the same as that of 1814. At the new elections, the electorate returned a majority for the constitutional royalists and the Liberals and the Ultras were reduced to a small minority. Now commenced the Constitutional régime which lasted from 1816 to 1820. This House passed two laws which were in harmony with the desires of the upper middle class; the first fixed the tax for electors at three hundred francs, and for candidates for deputies a tax of one thousand francs; the second law granted freedom of the press. During all this period the Liberals were gaining in strength; in 1817, they had 25 deputies; in 1818, 45; in 1819, they rose to 90 deputies.<sup>3</sup>

Alarmed by this increase, the foreign powers urged the king to take measures to check the growth of the Liberal party; but he refused to be guided by these counsels, and dismissed Richelieu who favoured this policy. He then formed the ministry of Decazès which favoured a non-partisan policy, breaking the unity of the Constitutional party in the Chamber of Deputies; a part of which went over to the Ultras who desired an electoral law which would exclude the Liberals from the Chamber. Decazès resisted this plan, and to strengthen his policy and pass a liberal press law, he created 73 peers to secure his majority in the Upper Chamber. Unfortunately the assassination of the Duc de Berry in 1820 which was attributed to the Liberal party, weakened his power, and, in the reaction which followed, Decazès was forced to resign. The king took a ministry from the Right under the leadership of Richelieu who began again the struggle against the Liberals.

For seven years the Right held their majority in the Chamber of Deputies, under Villèle. They made their power felt by undoing the work of the Constitutional party and abolishing the

<sup>2</sup> Seignobos, "Political History," p. 117.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

electoral and press laws. The press was put under a censorship and the electoral law of 1820 enlarged the Chamber of Deputies to 420 members.

The new elections of 1820 gave the Ultras an enormous majority and the Liberals were greatly reduced. This election was decisive for the Tricolour party who realised that they had no hope of obtaining power through legal methods. It was at this time that secret organisations were formed which covered France with a network of societies and worked for the propagation of liberal ideas. In 1814-15, the imperialists of the army in conjunction with young men of democratic ideas formed a society under the name of the "Chevaliers of Liberty." This society was dissolved after the return from Elba; but was reconstituted in 1820. The members now adopted for their watchwords, Liberty and Equality and took the oath to reveal nothing, to provide themselves with arms, and "to hold themselves ready for any event and any requisition." Their aims were to re-establish the electoral law of 1817, to maintain the integrity of the charter, and to deliver Louis XVIII "from the men of the court and the counter-revolution." Conspiring in August 1820, their plot was discovered and the conspirators were examined by the Chamber of Peers who subjected a few to a light punishment.

The effect of these trials upon the public was tremendous and added much to the popularity of the peers. It was now very evident that the Ultras no longer had the power to introduce the terror of 1815. Public opinion was against them and they did not dare brook its condemnation. The times were also marked with a revival of books and pamphlets, advocating liberal ideas. The Ultras published works which inflamed the zeal of their followers; the Liberals had two writers of great eminence, Benjamin Constant and Paul Louis Courier, whose works were disseminated and read in all parts of France. Two works, published at this time, attained an immense circulation: that of Mme. de Staël on the "Considérations sur la Révolution Française" of which sixty thousand copies were sold; and that of Barante, "Des Communes et de l'Aristocratie," which had a wide reading.

The students of the colleges began to be infected with liberal ideas. The Conservatives and Ultras, to counteract these influences, applied the laws against seditious writings and individual liberty. This aroused a fierce opposition and national subscriptions were raised "in favour of those citizens who would be victims of the measures against individual liberty." These sub-

scriptions were headed by names which carried great weight with the people, including those of the leaders who later came to the front in the Revolution; Lafitte, Lafayette, d'Argenson, Manuel, Casimir-Périer, Benjamin Constant, and Odilon Barrot.

In May 1821, Napoleon died and his death had a marked effect upon the growth of the liberal cause. The Imperialists united with the Liberals, and all parties opposed to the policy of the government entered into an alliance. They formed what was called the "comedy of five years" in which were grouped the doctrinaires, the republicans, the imperialists, the Orleanists, and some legitimist liberals.

This disaffection angered the Royalist party and they attacked their opponents with new severity. They suppressed many of the journals and condemned forty-two writers between April 1820 and May 1821. The *Minerve* thus announced the suppression in these words: "Liberty has recovered its empire beyond the Pyrenees; its sacred fire is not extinguished, it will be revived." But these efforts did not check the liberal movement. On the contrary, it stimulated the advocates of liberal ideas and pamphlets of all kinds furthered the liberal cause. As the struggle grew more bitter, the Ultras tended more and more towards reaction, while the Liberals gave more attention to revolutionary movements. The ministry, however, held the power in the Chamber of Deputies and opposed all efforts towards the amelioration of the laws. Under these conditions, a new movement arose, the secret society of the Charbonnerie. It extended its ramifications over all France under the leadership of Buchez and it was said that Lafayette was associated with it. Their aim was to educate the people in liberal ideas and they laid great stress upon the principle of the sovereignty of the people. To further their ends, a conspiracy broke out at Belfort in 1822 and a military plot was discovered at La Rochelle the same year. The leaders were seized and some of them put to death and one of them exclaimed, before he died, that "his death would be more useful than his life to the cause of liberty." "This love of liberty," remarked an old émigré who saw him die, "must be then a sentiment very powerful, very profound, to inspire so fanatical a devotion."

But the police continued their vigilance and destroyed everything which suggested the spirit of liberty. They even prohibited at the theatre the play, "Mariage de Figaro," because it was said to have been one of the causes of the first Revolution. But the more the suppression continued, the more the discontent



spread. In their zeal to check the growth of new ideas, the ministry closed the School of Medicine, suspended the lectures of Guizot at the Sorbonne, and other normal schools. In the excited state of the public mind, every event was magnified to serve the cause of liberty. Manuel had said in the Chamber of Deputies, "Théroigne de Mericourt was the first amazon of liberty," and this created such an uproar that he was excluded from the chamber, and the Left, as a protest against this action, followed him out of the house. The multitudes greeted him with enthusiasm, crying, "Vive Manuel, Vive Liberté." The party of the Left drew up a protest in which it said: "We, the undersigned members of the Chamber of Deputies of the departments, declare that we have seen with profound grief and indignation the illegal act, hostile to the Charter, to the royal prerogative and to all the principles of representative government, which has carried an attack upon the integrity of the national representation, in the person of a deputy, the guarantees assured to all as well as the rights of the electors and of all French citizens. We declare, in the face of our country, that, by these acts, the Chamber of Deputies has gone beyond the legal sphere and the limits of its mandate."

At this time, the Right forced the king to make war on Spain in support of the principle of absolutism and condemned and suspended all journals which criticised their action. These measures did not break the hold of the royalists upon the electorate. The Chamber of Deputies was dissolved in 1824 and the Right was returned with an overwhelming majority; the Liberals obtained only 19 seats. This Chamber was called "Chambre Retrouvée," as it resembled the Chamber of 1815. Every influence had been employed to determine the elections. The Keeper of the Seals had issued a statement to the employees of the government in which he had said: "Whoever accepts a post in the public service at the same time pledges himself to consecrate to the Government's service his efforts, his talents, his influence." And a general appealed to the military electors, saying, "the loss of employment will be the inevitable result of a disloyal conduct in these circumstances." It is interesting to note that the aristocracy were not above employing methods which are always severely condemned when employed by the democracy.

The Liberals issued a statement in their journals, the *Constitutionnel* and the *Courier*, setting forth the principles involved in the election. "Electors! Will you prevent the schemes which propose: 1st, to give the clergy control of marriage, to assure

them an independent income, and to give them control of the instruction of our youth; 2d, to re-establish the trade guilds and monopolies; 3d, to deprive the holders of industrial licenses of their political influence; 4th, to introduce into legislation some means of founding a landed aristocracy; 5th, to grant compensation to the émigrés (for the loss of their estates); 6th, to interpose legal obstacles to the subdivision of property.”<sup>4</sup> The appeal was without effect, and the Right, flushed with victory, now aimed to establish a landed aristocracy and restore the power of the clergy. In the meantime, the king died, and was succeeded by his brother, Count of Artois, as Charles X. It looked as if the days of 1816 were about to return, as the king, the Chamber of Deputies, and the ministry were now working in harmony. But there was a rift in the royalist majority which opened later into a schism. The first work of the Chamber of Deputies was to grant a milliard of francs to the émigrés who had lost their estates in the Revolution. They would have preferred to confiscate the estates in the hands of the present owners, but this was impracticable as they were guaranteed by the charter. In 1826, the royalists passed a law against sacrilege which inflicted the penalty of death upon any one who stole articles from the churches and they ended the session by increasing the dioceses and appointing a bishop head of the university.

These measures produced an outbreak of popular feeling which was reflected in the journals, pamphlets, and in historical works dealing with the Revolution. Thiers' first volume of the *French Revolution* appeared at this time and the “*Letters on the History of France*” by August Thierry which defended the *Tiers Etat* against the nobles and the clergy; “*Essays on the History of France*” by Guizot revealed the basis of liberty. All these works were read with avidity by the people and helped to confirm them in their liberal opinions. The sentiments were also reinforced by new combinations among the bourgeoisie who felt that their interests were being attacked by the royalists. An opposition party was formed of the manufacturers who resented the new landed aristocracy; by the Liberals who were subjected to a direct attack; and by the Gallicans who feared the tendencies towards Ultramontanism. A royalist Gallican, Montlosier, published a book which attacked the Jesuits and urged that the Articles of the Gallican Church of 1682 be taught in the schools. This divided the royalist party and the Right Centre separated

<sup>4</sup> Seignobos, “*Political History*,” p. 123.

themselves from the Right and joined the Liberals. The Chamber of Peers refused to go with the extremists and vetoed some of the bills. The ministry tried to crush the Opposition, but without effect. Villèle endeavoured to corrupt the press and gave vast sums to certain journals. An incident occurred with the National Guard which was not without its significance as showing the drift of public opinion. The National Guard was composed of picked men, nevertheless it did not hesitate to show its sympathy with the Opposition. As the king passed the regiments in review, they cried, "Long live the charter, down with the ministers." Orders were immediately given to disband the Guard. Villèle, in order to strengthen his ministry, created 76 peers and then to insure a longer lease of power, dissolved the Chamber of Deputies in November 1827. The elections went against him, as the Left, the Left-Centre, and the Defection united. Public opinion had changed and the opposition was returned with a majority of 190 members belonging to the Left. Then Villèle resigned and Charles X took a ministry from the Left-Centre, the ministry of Martignac, which became known as the ministry of conciliation. This was in January 1828. The ministry did not have a majority in the Chamber of Deputies and could have been overthrown at any time by a coalition of the party of the Left voting with the Right. Nor did it possess the real confidence of the king, who said to Martignac at the first meeting, "You should know that I part with M. de Villèle against my will; his system is mine, and I hope that you will conform yourselves to it."<sup>5</sup>

However, the ministry carried some reforms, passing a bill against electoral frauds and, to satisfy the Gallican party, a measure forbidding the unauthorised clergy from managing educational institutions; but it received only feeble support from the Left. On April 29th, the Martignac ministry was defeated by a combination of the Left and the Right over a bill relating to councils of the departments and the municipalities. Charles X had always been uneasy under this ministry which had been assailed by the émigrés and the court. "The court and the emigration party grouped around the princesses," says Lamartine, "loudly vented their indignation at the King's defection, in deserting his nobility and his clergy to deliver himself, like his unfortunate brother, Louis XVI, to an impious and plebeian ministry, which only differed from the Girondist ministry of

<sup>5</sup> Lamartine, "Restoration of the Monarchy," Vol. IV, p. 342.

Roland by its grace and deference, and which was conducting the monarchy with a hand less rude but equally certain, to disgrace and destruction." <sup>6</sup>

After the defeat of the ministry, Charles X had said to Martignac, "I told you so; nothing could satisfy those people." He now turned to the party of the Right and selected a new ministry with Polignac, an émigré, as its head. Bourmont, who deserted Napoleon at Waterloo, was made Minister of War and was an ultra-royalist. It was not without warning that the king took this step. The Duchess d'Angoulême told him, "In abandoning M. de Villèle, you descend the first step from your throne."

As soon as the new ministry was announced, the friends of the Constitution foresaw the beginning of the end, and the possibility of a coup d'état. This ministry was an act of defiance to the Liberal party. The whole country was thrown into agitation and the press launched out in attacks upon it. "Coblentz! Waterloo! 1815!" exclaimed the *Journal des Débats*, analysing the names of the ministers; "the emigration in M. de Polignac! Desertion to the enemy in M. de Bourmont! The horrors of the proscription in M. de Labourdonnaie! These are the three principals in the three great personages of the ministry! Press it, and it will drop nothing but humiliation, misfortune, and danger! Unhappy France! Unhappy King!" <sup>7</sup>

Men withdrew from the government. Chateaubriand threw up his ambassadorship of Italy; the prefect of the police and members of the Council of State resigned; Royer-Collard, who belonged to the Left-Centre, passed over to the Left; Casimir-Périer withdrew from the government and Guizot attacked it in the *Temps*, and Thiers in the *National*. Associations and clubs were formed throughout the kingdom to defend liberty, having pledged themselves to withhold supplies. Lafayette made a tour of the south and 100,000 persons turned out at Lyons to greet him and he made an address in favour of liberty which invoked unbounded enthusiasm. An association of Bretagne refused to pay taxes if the charter was violated, and its example was followed by associations in Paris, in Lorraine, in Bourgogne, and in Normandy. Moderate men like Guizot and De Broglie united with the young republicans. All the press, with the exception of the ultra-royalist organs, united against the government. The opposition, however, was mostly among the bourgeoisie; though there was a small group of republicans at Paris,

<sup>6</sup> Lamartine, "Restoration of the Monarchy," Vol. IV, p. 357.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 375.

composed of students and workingmen, who were in touch with Lafayette and were ready to fight.

The ministry at first took no overt step and men waited to learn its policy. The conflict began with the opening of the session of the Chamber of Deputies on March 2, 1830. The speech from the throne in its closing paragraph indicated the attitude of the king. "If culpable manœuvres should raise against my government obstacles which I do not and must not anticipate, my resolution to maintain the public peace would give me the strength to surmount them in the just confidence of Frenchmen and in the love which they have always shown for their king."<sup>s</sup>

In its address of reply, the Chamber of Deputies voted by 221 members to convey to the king these significant words: "The Charter makes the permanent agreement of the political views of your government with the views of your people the indispensable condition of orderly progress in public affairs. Sire, our loyalty, our devotion compel us to say that this agreement does not exist." When Charles X read this address, he exclaimed, "This is not a question of the ministry, but a question of the monarchy." He at once prorogued the Chamber and later dissolved it.

The issue was now joined between two irreconcilable principles which had been the subject of conflict during the last fifteen years, the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the sovereignty of the king. And the issue was to be settled by an appeal to the French people; for though the electors were few in comparison with the nation, being only 98,000, public opinion had enlisted in its service the masses of the people. The elections resulted in favour of the Chamber of Deputies and instead of 221 deputies, the Opposition was returned with 270.

The king was now confronted with either submitting to the voice of the people and dismissing his ministers or defying public opinion. He chose the latter alternative, and determined on a coup d'état. On July 26th, the ministry published in the *Moniteur* four ordinances; the first suppressed the liberty of the press; the second dissolved the Chamber of Deputies; the third changed the character of the elections, giving the power to the departments which would exclude the manufacturers and nearly all those who belonged to the Opposition from voting; the fourth restored to the Council of State all those who had been excluded during the last ten years, and who had been known for their ultra-royalist opinions.

<sup>s</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 381.

When the ordinances were first published, Paris was struck with stupor; soon the news spread through the cafés and reached the lecture-rooms of the schools. The multitude gathered in the streets, but there was no demonstration. Later in the day, five deputies in conjunction with the editors of the *Temps* and the *National*, held a meeting at which they drew up a protest against the ordinances. "These memorable ordinances are the most brazen violation of the laws. The legal régime is interrupted; that of force has commenced; the Government has lost to-day its legal character which commands obedience. For our part we shall resist it; it is for France to judge how far her resistance shall extend."<sup>9</sup>

Thiers drew up this protest himself, wishing to make no suggestion of an appeal to arms. Nevertheless the protest suggested revolution and intimated something more than passive resistance. At this time, the Chamber of Deputies had not met and there was no force behind the editors to sustain their action. The people seemed to be unconcerned by the coup d'état and the higher bourgeoisie dreaded calling the people into the conflict. The large employers, however, closed their workshops and threw the workmen on the streets.

"At Paris, the day of the 26th was very calm. At the Palais Royal, however, several young men climbed on chairs, as in the time of Camille Desmoulins. They read the *Moniteur* aloud, recalling to the people the violation of the Charter, and by ardent gestures and passionate words tried to excite both the people and themselves. But dancing was going on in the environs of the capital. The people were either working, or pleasure hunting. Only the Bourgeoisie seemed dismayed. The ordinances contained a double attack; through its political power in striking the legislators, and through its moral power in striking the writers."<sup>10</sup>

There had been a slight demonstration in the evening, and a crowd had gathered before the residence of the Duc de Polignac, and a few stones had been thrown at the windows, but otherwise the day had passed off quietly.

The next day, the 27th of July, Polignac congratulated the ministry that quiet reigned in Paris, and that in the end the ordinances would be accepted. So little idea had he of any resistance that he had assembled only 14,000 troops in Paris. En-

<sup>9</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté en France," Vol. II, p. 172.

<sup>10</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de Dix Ans," Vol. I, p. 175.

couraged by the order of the city, the ministry decided to proceed with vigour and they sent an order to the police to seize the presses of the *Temps*. When the officers arrived, the editor with his employees were drawn up in front of the building and protested against the illegality of breaking into the building. A crowd gathered, their sympathies with the editor. The officers, on finding their entrance barred and the doors locked, sent for a locksmith, but he, struck with the menacing attitude of the crowd, was terrified and fled; another locksmith was brought, but the people took his tools away from him; finally the officers secured a locksmith who was accustomed to put irons on criminals, and he carried out their orders. The effect of this dispute gave to the people an example of "disobedience combined with a love for law." In the meantime some of the more ardent of the journalists determined to rouse the people and they ran through the workshops inciting them to insurrection. The students from the schools created a commotion in the streets, waving canes and crying, "Vive la Charte." Thiers and his associates tried still to hold the conflict within legal limits; but the resentment of the people was rising, their discontent was increasing, and they were beginning to show a menacing mood. The troops had been posted around the palace and in the principal boulevards and Marshal Marmont, who had betrayed Napoleon in 1814, had been entrusted with the command, though he was in sympathy with the people.

The troops themselves were in an uncertain position as they, too, were in sympathy with the people, and pushed them before them with "friendly looks and suppliant gestures." A lady of fashion called out to the troops as they passed beneath her window, "Do the people no harm." Late in the day a man unfurled before the people a tricoloured flag which recalled the memories of the Empire and its glory. "Some old men uncovered their heads in reverence; others shed tears; all faces became pale at the sight." But the time had not yet come for unfurling the standard of insurrection. In the evening, the students of the Polytechnic School broke their bounds, and ran to the home of the banker Lafitte, to urge him to rouse the people in insurrection; he refused, fearing the people and dreading a repetition of the Revolution of 1793. Nevertheless from that moment, the students threw themselves into the movement and prepared for the revolution on the morrow. The day closed in quiet and "the troops," says Lamartine, "having returned to their barracks, the

streets were deserted and silent. There was nothing to indicate a city about in a few short hours to burst forth in an enormous explosion."<sup>11</sup>

Next morning the insurrection broke out. The republicans in the east of Paris organised it among the workmen of the faubourgs in conjunction with the students of the schools. In the early morning, barricades were erected in the streets. When Marshal Marmont heard of it, he divided his army into two columns, one to march to the Hôtel de Ville by the quays of the Seine and the other by the great boulevards. The fighting commenced and the last column as it went through the streets was attacked from the houses, and as it passed on, new barricades were erected in its rear and when it arrived at the Place de la Bastille, it was surrounded on all sides. The other column attained the Hôtel de Ville after some severe fighting, but was detained there by the insurgents. As the conflict developed in favour of the people and as the troops could make no headway, they were withdrawn from the Place de la Bastille and later the Hôtel de Ville was captured by the people. They were without leaders, as the bourgeoisie hesitated to put themselves at the head of the insurrection; but a man named Duborung, calling himself a general, took command and installed himself at the Hôtel de Ville and ordered the insurgents to unfurl the black flag. By this time the cry was no longer heard, "Vive la Charte," but "Down with the Bourbons." Every part of Paris was now in insurrection, and the fight was going everywhere in favour of the people. The royal troops had been beaten on all sides and Marshal Marmont concentrated his troops around the Louvre and the Tuileries. On the 29th, at mid-day the insurgents captured the Tuileries and the defeated troops were withdrawn along the Champs-Élysées in the direction of St. Cloud. Lafayette was proclaimed the commander of the National Guard, and a provisional government was installed at the Hôtel de Ville under the direction of the republicans. Lafayette went to the Hôtel de Ville "and an hour afterwards M. de Lafayette held in his hands the destiny of France."<sup>12</sup>

Now that the victory of the people was assured, the leaders of the bourgeoisie met at the home of Lafitte with the deputies of the Chamber who were in Paris and decided to organise a municipal commission and published this statement: "The deputies present at Paris have united to remedy the grave dangers

<sup>11</sup> Lamartine, "History of the Restoration," Vol. IV, p. 428.

<sup>12</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de Dix Ans" Vol. I, p. 278.



which menace the safety of persons and property. A commission has been named to watch over the interests of all, in the absence of all orderly organisation."

The bourgeoisie now began to organise the Revolution, and, supported by the National Guard and the troops of the line who had surrendered and fraternised with the people, they ordered many arbitrary arrests and disarmed many of the workingmen. The king, who was ignorant of the nature of the insurrection, had been prevailed upon to accept the resignation of his ministry, and had withdrawn the ordinances after the capture of the Tuileries. He then appointed a new ministry who would be more in harmony with the members of the Chamber of Deputies. But when the ministers appeared at Paris and tried to get into communication with Lafayette at the Hôtel de Ville, the republicans in the hall met the emissary of the minister with cries of "Down with the Bourbons." When the same emissary approached Lafitte, he was met with the response that it was too late, as blood had flowed between the Dynasty and the people. The leaders at Lafitte's were now planning to put the Duc d'Orleans on the throne and Thiers drew up a proclamation with this design. "Charles X can no longer enter Paris; he has shed the blood of the people; the republic would expose us to frightful divisions; it would embroil us with Europe. The Duke of Orleans is a Prince devoted to the cause of the Revolution. The Duke of Orleans has never fought against us; the Duke of Orleans was at Jemmapes. The Duke of Orleans is a royal citizen. The Duke of Orleans has carried into the fire the tricoloured cockade; the Duke of Orleans can alone carry it still. We do not wish any other. The Duke of Orleans has not decided. He waits our opinion. Let us proclaim our wishes and he will accept the Charter as we have always understood and wished it. It is from the French people that he will take his crown."<sup>13</sup>

Through this proclamation, very adroitly drawn up, the people who knew very little about the Duke of Orleans, as he had taken no part in the Revolution, were thus informed of his qualifications. It was an effort to sway public opinion in his favour. But far from meeting with favour among the republicans at the Hôtel de Ville, it only aroused their indignation and the most ardent among them published their views and their demands for a republic. They issued this manifesto to the French people: "France is free. She wishes a constitution; she only grants to the Provisional Government the right of consulting

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 306.

her; while awaiting the expression of her will by the new elections, she supports the following principles: no more royalty; the government to be administered by mandatories elected by the nation; the executive power to be committed to a temporary president; liberty of religion; no more state religion; the employment of the army and navy guaranteed against all arbitrary dismissals; the establishment of the national guard throughout all France; the care of the Constitution to be confided to them. For these principles we have exposed our lives; we shall sustain them, if necessary, by insurrection."<sup>14</sup>

But this appeal had little influence on public opinion and on the result of the Revolution. The deputies, united at the Chamber of Deputies, issued a manifesto calling upon the Duke of Orleans to exercise the functions of lieutenant-general of the kingdom and he accepted the office. This proclamation was signed by 91 deputies and supported by the bourgeois class. The Duke of Orleans now prepared for his famous ride across Paris to obtain the assent of the Provisional Government established at the Hôtel de Ville. There everything depended upon Lafayette. He had been surrounded by adherents of the Orleanist party since the 30th, and they had pointed out to him the danger of founding a republic at that time. They showed him that a republic, proclaimed against the opinions of the deputies, would inevitably lead to civil war and possibly a Bourbon reaction. Lafayette hesitated, but separated from the young republicans, and fearing an eruption of democracy, decided to accept the decision of the deputies and support the cause of the Duke of Orleans. Therefore he received the duke at the head of the stairway and paid him all the honours due to a popular sovereign. Appearing together at the window of the Hôtel de Ville, with the tricolour above them, everything was calculated to excite the enthusiasm of the people.

"They (the people) kept on crying," says Louis Blanc, "'Vive Lafayette!' When he had embraced the duke, they also cried: 'Vive le Duc d'Orleans!' The rôle of the people was ended; the reign of the bourgeoisie commenced."<sup>15</sup>

But the people had not fought and died at the barricades in vain. Their struggle for liberty and democracy had awakened a new passion in humanity and it had been the signal to call into action the democratic forces of Belgium and England. The Revolution of 1830 was only one step in the advance of the

<sup>14</sup> Louis Blanc, "Histoire de Dix Ans," Vol. I, p. 350.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

democratic movement. The next step would be marked with an upheaval of the democratic masses which would shake the world; the beginning of the march of democracy to victory and the establishment of republican government.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE UPHEAVAL OF DEMOCRACY: THE REVOLUTION OF 1848

THE Revolution of 1830 was the forerunner of the Revolution of 1848. The seeds of revolution had been sown at that time which bore fruit in the great democratic upheaval of that memorable year. The eighteen years of the reign of Louis Philippe were the formative period of democracy in France. While the bourgeoisie had organised and controlled the government under the citizen-king, it maintained its power in spite of an opposition which became more active with each passing year. The Revolution of 1830 had let loose men's passions and aroused in the masses a new desire for liberty and equality. It had reawakened the passions of 1793 and many men dreamed of a régime where the sovereign people would control the government. The part that the people played behind the barricades and the victory which they achieved gave them a consciousness of power which made them restless under the new régime. The settlement of the Revolution of 1830 left four parties in the kingdom. The Constitutional party, comprising both conservatives and liberals, which supported the king and accepted the Constitution and the Charter; the Legitimist party which looked upon the king as a usurper and desired to bring back Charles X and the older branch of the Bourbons; the Republican party which disliked the monarchy and avowed their purpose of establishing a republic; the Socialist party which aimed at a complete overturn of the social order and the amelioration of the economic and social conditions of the working classes. The last three parties were in the minority and the problem before them was to alienate the workers from their tacit support of the government and to educate them and win them over to their principles. At the beginning of the reign, these parties were in antagonism to each other, impelled with divergent aims and opposing principles; but the spirit of the age, the changing economic conditions, and the reactionary tendencies of the government finally brought about a coalition which produced the Revolution of 1848.

There were four causes which prepared the way for the Revolution. First, the dissatisfaction of the republicans with the settlement of 1830; second, the rise and development of socialism; third, the reactionary policy of the government; fourth, parliamentary conflicts leading to an appeal to the democracy.

It was the discontent of the republican minority with the monarchy which kept alive the revolutionary spirit. At first, the republicans were inclined to acquiesce in the Orleanist monarchy of July and to co-operate with the government. They accepted the verdict of Lafayette, "That which is necessary ~~is~~ day for the French people is a popular throne surrounded by republican institutions, altogether republican." On August 22d, the king formed a ministry taken from the two wings, the conservative and liberal, of the Constitutional party, though he chose the majority of the ministers among those who were opposed to any further revolutionary action. These ministers were De Broglie, Guizot, Molé, Casimir-Périer, Dupin, the elder, Baron Louis, and General Gerard. The minority ministers were Dupont de l'Eure, a republican who accepted the monarchy in the interest of harmony, and Lafitte who represented the bourgeoisie as opposed to aristocracy. Moreover, their influence was strengthened by the appointment of Lafayette as commander-in-chief of the National Guard and Odilon Barrot as prefect of the police. These two officials together with Dupont de l'Eure formed a sort of triumvirate who watched over the Constitution and held in their hands the armed force which would assure the Revolution.

It was not long, however, before these opposing elements in the ministry clashed over questions of policy. Owing to the circumstances surrounding the violent death of the Prince de Condé, Guizot, Molé, De Broglie, and Baron Louis resigned on the 30th of November, 1830, and Lafitte became president of the council with a ministry more in harmony with the party of progress. This ministry passed a number of urgent reforms, such as lowering the security required from the press, abolishing the duty on stamps for journals, and establishing jury trials for offences committed by the press. The Revolution had shaken the economic structure and had brought on a financial crisis which threw multitudes of workers out of employment and disturbed the business of the country. This reacted unfavourably against the ministry, and as their foreign policy favoured the support of the revolutionary action of Poland and Italy which was at variance with the views of the king, the ministry of Lafitte resigned on

March 12, 1831. Casimir-Périer, who was president of the Chamber of Deputies, was called upon by the king to form a new ministry, representing the conservatives in the Constitutional party. He dissolved the Chamber and appealed to the country on the very limited suffrage of property, and obtained a majority of 200. The policy of this party was to consolidate the monarchy under the control of the bourgeoisie, to pursue a foreign policy of non-interference with other nations, and to check the revolutionary spirit of the republicans. Their policy met with ~~opposition~~ in the Chamber of Deputies by the Liberals, united with the radical deputies of the extreme Left, Arago and Garnier Pagès. Outside the Chamber, they were opposed by the republicans who were disappointed by what they called the defection of 1830. Taking advantage of the discontent caused by the commercial crisis, the republicans organised the workers and formed a society of Order and Progress in which each member was pledged "to possess a gun in condition for use and fifty cartridges." As Levasseur said, "It was an insurrection, incessantly suspended like a tempest, over society. It broke out on the slightest occasion; at the time of the trial of the ministers; at the time of the mass held by the Legitimists at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois; at the time of Poland; at the time of the acquittal of the accused in April; at the time of the decorations of July." <sup>1</sup>

The ministry of Casimir-Périer put down the insurrections with a high hand and the republicans were driven to cover. In July, an insurrection broke out at Lyons in which the workingmen, dissatisfied with their wages and casual employment, rose in revolt against their masters and demanded a minimum wage. At first they were successful and seized the city and held it for some days against the military forces; but later the authorities, supported by new troops of the line, overcame all resistance. The government at Paris had taken strong measures and Casimir-Périer had sent down Marshal Soult to re-establish order. These insurrections had no practical results and left the working classes in a worse condition than before. "The want of work," says Levasseur, "fed the insurrections; the insurrections further exhausted the sources of work." <sup>2</sup>

Henceforth the workingmen, realising that it was useless to struggle against the manufacturers, were prepared to listen with sympathy to the socialist and republican propaganda, and gradually enlisted in the republican party.

<sup>1</sup> Levasseur, "Histoire des Classes Ouvrières," Vol. II, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4

The republicans, though defeated, did not give up their opposition. On the contrary, they redoubled their efforts. At this time, they organised the Society of the Rights of Man which proclaimed the sovereignty of the people, universal suffrage, and the emancipation of the working class by a better division of labour. By their aggressive propaganda, they came into conflict with the government and some of their number were arrested. Brought to trial, one of them thus expressed the ideas which prevailed at this period: "Down with all privilege, even that of birth! Down with the monopoly of the rich! Down with the exploitation of man by man! Down with social inequalities! . . . That is what occupies us in secret meetings; that is what the press scarcely speaks of; it works generally only with a political change. However, the greatest revolutions are not political revolutions; when they are not accompanied with social revolutions, there are no results, or almost none."<sup>3</sup>

This attitude marked a new departure for the republican party and led to a split in its ranks. While the Society of the Rights of Man had adopted the Declaration of Rights of 1793 as its programme, many of the members under the leadership of Cavaignac thought that this should involve a social revolution, accepting a statement of Robespierre on property which was not contained in the Declaration to this effect: "Property is the right that every citizen has to the enjoyment of the portion of wealth assured to him by the law." Armand Carrel, editor of the *National*, dissented from this view and thus helped to widen the schism. From this time, the republicans adopted a more aggressive attitude and tended to sympathise more with the socialists in their demand for a social revolution. The effect of this alliance became manifest in the insurrections which broke out at Lyons and Paris in 1834. Unlike the previous insurrection of 1832 at Lyons, which arose from the economic demands of the workers, this insurrection was ushered in with cries of, "Long live the Republicans. Down with the rich!" Both insurrections were defeated and henceforth the workingmen turned to the socialists and became fervent disciples of socialist theories. Then the republicans united with the socialists and made their principal aim the amelioration of the condition of the working classes. But the repressive measures of the government forced them to work underground through secret societies which extended all over France, undermining the government, and preparing the way for the great upheaval of 1848.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

The second factor in bringing on the Revolution was the rise and development of socialism. The founders of socialism were Saint-Simon and Fourier who established schools in which they advocated the reconstruction of society and the amelioration of the lot of the working classes. They taught that labour is the fraternal bond which unites all classes of society. Saint-Simon taught that labour should be rewarded, "each according to his needs." Fourier held that "all annual benefits should be divided into three lots: a common interest of action; a common dividend for ~~workers~~ workers; a common recompense for the most worthy; capital, labour, and talent would find themselves thus rewarded." Fourier also advocated the propagation of his ideas by peaceful methods and a "social reform without revolution." Their ideas and teachings made a deep impression upon the liberal classes and were greeted with enthusiasm by the students in the university, but they failed to penetrate the minds of the masses. In the early thirties, these schools grew rapidly, but the bourgeoisie, absorbed in business, looked upon the new ideas as utopian. However, a new word was coined to designate the disciples of these new social ideas. In 1834, the word socialist came into use, appearing in a book by Reybaud in which he related the life and teachings of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen. This book had a large circulation and attracted many disciples to these schools.

Pierre Leroux, another writer, attracted attention by his writings in the *New Encyclopedia* edited by Reybaud in 1834, and signalised himself by his views on equality of men and the reorganisation of society. In 1840, he published his views in a completed form in a book entitled, "De l'Humanité." He taught that "Equality is a divine law, a law prior to all laws and from which all laws are derived." "Labour alone produces. If, then, there is in society a man who receives without working or who receives more than his labour ought to bring him, this man exploits another man. Those who hold the instruments of labour exploit those who do not own them."<sup>4</sup>

Leroux was an advocate of the peaceful solution of the problems of the proletariat. His views were treated as utopian at the time and he did not exercise much influence among the working classes. Later he came to the front at the time of the Revolution and was recognised as one of the leaders of the social democracy.

The growth of socialistic ideas among the working classes was due in a large measure to the work of Cabet who published his book on the "Voyage to Icaria," in 1839, which had a large

<sup>4</sup> Levasseur, "Histoire des Classes Ouvrières," Vol. II, p. 37.



circulation in the workshops of Paris. In this work, he drew a picture of an ideal republic after the manner of the Utopia of Sir Thomas More of England, in the sixteenth century. Cabet formulated in his book two principles which have entered in some degree into all later forms of socialism: the republic demands "from each according to his ability," and "gives to each according to his needs." These ideas became the slogan of the workshops, and the growth of socialism among the working classes was very rapid from this time.

But how to bring about these changes in the social order had not been clearly defined. The thinker who gave to social democracy a definite programme was Louis Blanc who published in the *Revue de Progrès* in 1839 his plan of the "Organisation of Labour." This was republished in book form a year later. This phrase, "Organisation of Labour," became the watchword and the cry of a political campaign. In 1840, Arago, member of the Chamber of Deputies, brought the ideas which were fermenting in the minds of the masses into the legislative hall of the nation. He said: "There is a real evil, an evil which does not appear to me alone, a cruel evil for which it is necessary to find a remedy. I shall raise murmurs, if I say that in view of these conditions, there is a necessity for the 'Organisation of Labour.' In view of our apathy, the ideas of the Saint-Simonists and the Fourierists have made great progress among the working classes. The working classes feel humiliated by a kind of political helotism (violent murmurs) by which the actual manner of election displaces them."<sup>5</sup>

While the Chamber of Deputies dissented from these views, the workingmen sent a deputation to the Observatory to thank the astronomer, Arago, for his speech, and from that day the phrase, "Organisation of Labour," was adopted by the deputies of the extreme Left as a political principle.

In 1843, Louis Blanc founded and edited a journal, *La Réforme*, which became the organ of the social democrats and exercised a wide influence on the progress of events. The last two years had witnessed a growing agitation which culminated in sending petitions to the Chamber of Deputies. Louis Blanc through his paper had circulated in the workshops a petition in which he demanded of the government that it institute an inquiry into the condition of the workers and put an end to competition in business. This petition was presented by Ledru-Rollin. A year later, the *Pacific Democrat* presented another petition in favour of the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

"organisation of labour" and denouncing the effects of anarchic competition, demanded an inquiry "on the practical means of substituting an association of interests, the organisation of labour, the good accord of classes in the furious combat which covers with ruin and disasters the field of all industries."<sup>6</sup>

So much had the propagation of socialist ideas spread among the working classes that the Prefecture of Police, in 1847, drew the attention of the government to it. In his report, he called attention "to the socialistic pamphlets which have been still more numerous last year than the preceding years," and to the tendency of the anarchical parties "to neglect the questions of politics, properly speaking, to throw themselves into ideas of social renovation. Cabet, Dexamy, P. Leroux, Proudhon, the writers of *l'Atelier* and of *Fraternité* and the Fourierist school, who, although differing among themselves, are attached to the same principle . . . the more or less violent destruction of the actual social order by abolition of the family and of property," and he concluded his report, saying, "It is easy to comprehend all the influence which can be obtained by similar writings on the easy and uncultured minds of the workers, whose material appetites, moreover, are humoured. There is the true plague of the epoch and it should be recognised that each year it makes new progress."<sup>7</sup>

This report was made within one year of the breaking out of the Revolution; but the government was oblivious to the danger of the agitation and seemed to have looked upon the socialists as harmless enthusiasts. During the whole reign of Louis Philippe, the government, under all its changing forms, had shown a disdain for public opinion apart from that of the higher bourgeoisie who controlled the political power. It was this disdain and the repressive measures which resulted from it that was another cause of the Revolution. Since the fall of the first Liberal ministry of Lafitte, the Constitutional party had met the agitation of the republicans with repressive measures. And it was this attitude that did much to increase the antagonism of the Liberals and to make, in the end, the Revolution inevitable. The first repressive laws were passed in 1834 after the insurrections of that year and forbade any associations of over twenty members. This law only served to increase the writings attacking the government and it lost the support of many liberal-minded men. On July 28,

<sup>6</sup> Levasseur, "Histoire des Classes Ouvrières," Vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

1835, Fieschi made an attempt upon the life of the king and this gave the government the excuse for passing the repressive laws of September, 1835, "modifying the rights of the press, abrogating the formalities of criminal judgments, doubling the security of journals; changing the majority for decisions of the jury; punishing offences against the King and attacks against the principle of the constitutional monarchy; rendering obligatory the previous authorisation for the representation of dramatic works, as well as putting on sale pictures and engravings."<sup>8</sup>

These laws rendered the government very unpopular, but at the same time it succeeded in muzzling the democratic and republican press. In this step, Thiers was united with Guizot and De Broglie who now supported the king in his reactionary tendencies. The king, then, broke all his promises and laughed at republican institutions. In adopting these severe "laws of intimidation," he renounced all sympathy with the republicans who had made the Revolution of July. Nevertheless these laws did not quiet the agitation. On the contrary, they served only to aggravate the attacks against the government, and insurrections continued to disturb the public peace. In 1836, the Bonapartists took an active part in the agitation and Louis Napoleon made a futile attempt to rouse the garrison at Strasbourg in his favour by cries of "Vive Napoleon, Vive Liberté, Vive l'Empereur"; but he failed in his enterprise. This was the beginning of the entrance of the Napoleonic party into the arena of politics and it began to scheme against the government and to form a party of opposition which gradually attracted to itself the old admirers of the great emperor.

The ferment of minds and the growth of socialistic ideas led to an insurrection at Paris on the 12th of May, 1839, under the leadership of Barbès and Blanqui, radical socialists, with the cry of "Vive la République," but it was not supported by the workers and proved abortive. Though its suppression tended to increase the power of the Constitutional party, yet it also intensified the Opposition and the agitation now passed from the street to the Chamber of Deputies.

Moreover, in the conflict of political parties and their struggle for supremacy, the forces working for revolution were augmented and accelerated. The conflict with the republicans and the ambition of party leaders for office and power had led to many changes in the ministry. The king had changed the ministry ten times between 1830 and 1840. To some extent this had been due

<sup>8</sup> A. Chailamel, "Histoire de la Liberté en France," Vol. II, p. 206.

to the desire of the king to govern independently of the Chamber of Deputies. In 1839, the Opposition overthrew the personal ministry of the king under Molé, on the ground that the "king reigns, but does not govern." This defeat brought in the ministry of M. Thiers, who increased his popularity by bringing back the body of Napoleon from St. Helena and erecting for him a magnificent mausoleum at Paris. But his foreign policy, appealing to the national aspirations for a vigorous action abroad, antagonised the king and he was soon forced to resign and make way for a new ministry under Guizot who advocated peace at any price. This policy opened the government to the charge of subordinating its foreign affairs to the dictation of England, and did much to increase the unpopularity of the government, but in spite of this, the ministry of Guizot maintained itself in power for eight years until the breaking out of the Revolution. During this period the demand for electoral reform became more insistent and the resistance of the government to this demand only served to unite all parties against it.

The ministry of Guizot relied for its support upon the king and the higher bourgeoisie who controlled the franchise. Under this system, only 244,000 voted out of a possible 9,000,000 under universal suffrage. On February 14, 1842, the Chamber of Deputies rejected a measure of reform which would have extended the franchise to officials and the electors of the intellectual classes who paid a smaller sum than the 200 franc tax under the present system. This defeat was a signal for a coalition of all the Opposition in the Chamber of Deputies. The small group of the Legitimists united with the parties of the Left: the Left-Centre under Thiers, the dynastic Left under Odilon Barrot, and the extreme Left under Arago. They accused the ministry of Guizot of maintaining its power through corruption and inaction in domestic affairs and a policy of subservience to other nations in foreign affairs. In 1839, Lamartine characterised the situation by saying, "The French nation is bored"; and again in 1842, he exclaimed, "a stone post could carry out this policy." Under these circumstances, the demand for reform took various forms; the dynastic Left demanded lowering the tax-paying franchise so that jurors, officers appointed by the king, graduates of the faculties, notaries, officers of the National Guard, and municipal councillors could vote in the cities. The radical Left proposed to give the franchise to all the members of the National Guard. Arago and Ledru-Rollin advocated universal suffrage. But Guizot refused to make any concessions, holding that 200,000 voters were

sufficient. At this time he uttered the famous phrase, "Work and grow rich and you will become voters," and speaking concerning universal suffrage, he said, "This world is no place for universal suffrage, that absurd system which would call all living creatures to the exercise of political rights." To support his position he appealed to the electorate in 1846, and it returned a large majority in favour of the ministry. The upper bourgeoisie were behind the government and by the plunder of corruption and the favours of the government were opposed to all reform. Guizot fancied that he could defy public opinion, and, supported by the king, could ignore all demands for a change of the system.

As Challamel says, "Governmental corruption invaded French society, and Guizot, entrenched in his power as in an impregnable fortress, braved unpopularity, disdained well-founded attacks, forgot his past even as a professor. At the College of France, Adam Mickiewicz ceased to be professor in 1844, Edgar Quinet in 1846, Jules Michelet at the end of 1847. Their courses appeared to be dangerous."<sup>9</sup>

Guizot had a majority of 98 in the Chamber of Deputies and his will dictated the policy of the government. In 1847, the Chamber of Deputies again refused all demands for electoral reform and of any changes in the taxes to lighten the burdens of the people. This relief was imperative as the financial crisis of 1847 had ruined many and thrown thousands of workers out of employment. It has been said that "in Paris during the winter of 1847, one-third of the population was in receipt of charity and 450,000 persons received food tickets."<sup>10</sup> Revolution was in the air and it was clear to all thoughtful observers that the country was facing a grave political crisis; but the government ignored all the signs of revolution and complacently held to its policy of opposing all change.

Under these circumstances, the democrats united with the socialists, formed a coalition with the Liberals in the Chamber of Deputies and decided to appeal to the nation by organising a series of banquets to influence public opinion. At one banquet more than two hundred electors and many deputies were present who protested against the abuses of the electoral system, proposed a toast on national sovereignty and sang the "Marseillaise." Later, at a banquet at Mâcon, Lamartine, who had attained national fame by the publication of his book that year on the "Histoire des Girondins," assailed the government and

<sup>9</sup> A. Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté en France," Vol. II, p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> Postgate, "Revolution," p. 165.

recalled the true spirit of the French Revolution. "Is the French Revolution, as the adorers of the past say, a great sedition of a nation disturbed for no reason, and destroying, in their insensate convulsions, their church, their monarchy, their classes, their institutions, their nationality, and even rending the map of Europe? No! the revolution has not been a miserable sedition of France; for a sedition subsides as it rises, and leaves nothing but corpses and ruins behind it. The Revolution has left scaffolds and ruins, it is true; therein is its remorse; but it has also left a doctrine; it has left a spirit which will be enduring and perpetual so long as human reason shall exist. . . . And if you ask what is the moral force which shall bend the government beneath the will of the nation, I will answer you; it is the sovereignty of ideas, the royalty of mind, the republic, the true republic of intelligence; in one word—opinion. It holds in its hands the equilibrium between ideas and institutions, the balance of the human mind. In one of the scales of this balance—understand it well—will be for a long time placed mental superstitions, prejudices, self-styled useful, the divine rights of kings, the distinctions of right among classes, international animosities, the spirit of conquest, the venal alliance of church and state, the censorship of thought, the silence of tribunes, and the ignorance and systematic degradation of the masses. In the other scale, we ourselves will place the lightest and most impalpable thing of all that God has created—light, a little of that light which the French Revolution evolved at the close of the last century, from a volcano, doubtless, but from a volcano of truth."<sup>11</sup>

This speech resounded throughout all France and placed Lamartine in the first rank of the leaders of the Revolution. On November 7th, Ledru-Rollin, speaking at Châlons to the toast, "the Convention of '93," cried: "We are ultra-radicals, if you understand by this word a party which wishes to make a reality of the great symbols—liberty, equality, and fraternity."

But Guizot and the king, unmoved by the popular demonstrations, continued to adhere to their policy. Indeed, at the opening of the Chamber of Deputies, December 28, 1847, Guizot spoke of the national aspirations as "blind and hostile passions." These words angered and exasperated the Opposition and increased the opponents of the government. Men began to question the wisdom of legal opposition and to consider an appeal to force. The crisis arose over holding a banquet at the Twelfth Arrondissement of Paris on the 22d of February and furnished the pretext

<sup>11</sup> Lamartine, "French Revolution of 1848," Vol. I, pp. 18, 21.

for the outbreak of a popular demonstration. This marked the beginning of the Revolution. The deputies of the Opposition had arranged to hold a banquet, but the government forbade holding the meeting. The deputies still persisted in their purpose and published a statement protesting against the arbitrary action of the government, declaring that the right of reunion was "inherent in all free constitutions"; but at the last moment, seeing the danger "of provoking a collision between the citizens and the public authority," they decided to abandon the banquet. On the 22d, the prefecture of the police placarded a prohibition against the banquet and gave warning that he was ready to disperse all assemblies in the streets.

On the same day, Odilon Barrot moved in the Chamber of Deputies the accusation against the ministry; but Guizot, still blind to the state of popular feeling, precipitated events by declaring, that "this was not the day for universal suffrage." While the deputies hesitated and decided to give up the banquet, the people took matters into their own hands. The revolutionary leaders of the faubourgs and the students of the schools determined to make a demonstration. They called out their adherents and marched to the Madeleine and Place de la Concorde to protest against the government, sang the "Hymn of the Girondins" and the "Marseillaise," and ended with cries, "Vive la Réforme!" The excitement of Paris continued during the night and some barricades were erected in the eastern quarters of the city. On the 23d, the people assembled again, and a mob led by a man named Lagrange, a violent revolutionist, went to the home of Guizot where they found the troops drawn up in line. Lagrange fired a pistol at the troops and they returned the fire, killing and wounding about fifty men. Then the mob placed their dead upon wagons and went through the streets, crying for vengeance upon the monarchy. The same day Guizot resigned and Thiers was called upon to form a ministry. The National Guard had been drawn up and placed under the command of General Bugeaud, who was ready to sustain the monarchy and fire upon the people, if necessary, but Thiers was determined to follow the plan of conciliation and sent word to the general not to fire upon the people and to withdraw the troops to the vicinity of the palace. On the 24th, the troops were massed around the Palais Royal and the Tuileries, and, as the people pressed upon them, the troops began to fraternise with them. On hearing this, the king put on his uniform and went out to review the National Guard, but the troops showed themselves cold and indifferent and even hostile.

From the ranks came cries of "Vive la Réforme!" The king shortly afterwards returned to the palace and then Girardin urged upon him the need of abdication, saying, "Sire, the abdication of the king or the abdication of the monarchy—behold the dilemma! Time does not allow even a moment to seek a third issue to the affair."<sup>12</sup> Some of the courtiers urged the king not to sign his abdication, but under the entreaties of his son and family, whom the shouts of the insurgents had frightened, the king finally yielded to the advice of Girardin. Then, writes Lamartine, "the King took off his uniform and his decorations. He laid his sword upon the table. He put on a simple black dress, and offered his arm to the Queen, to leave the palace to a new reign. The stifled sobs of the spectators alone interrupted the silence of this last moment."<sup>13</sup>

The Duchess of Orleans remained with her small son, the Count of Paris, to save the crown. Meantime the insurgents had assailed and forced the entrance of the Palais Royal and sacked it and were approaching the Tuileries. The Duchess of Orleans fled with her son to the Chamber of Deputies. Arriving there with M. Dupin, they found only a few deputies assembled and Dupin who was president of the Chamber ascended the tribune and said that the king had abdicated in favour of his grandson and had appointed the duchess regent. The Chamber of Deputies received this announcement with applause and proceeded to vote the Count of Paris, king, with the Duchess of Orleans as regent. The insurgents who had broken into the Tuileries, after the departure of the royal family, being unrestrained by the troops, now invaded the Chamber of Deputies and compelled it to disavow the regency; under the dictation of the insurgents, the republican group who remained in the Chamber, led by Lamartine, proposed the republic and a Provisional Government. Then they appointed Dupont de l'Eure, Lamartine, Arago, Marie, Garnier Pagès, Crémieux, and Ledru-Rollin, ministers. These events had taken place with unexpected rapidity and the insurrection had passed from a demonstration for reform into a revolution. As Thiers expressed it, "The tide was rising, was rising"; after submerging the reform ministry, royalty, the regency," finally invading the Chamber of Deputies, and coming to its flood by organising a provisional government.<sup>14</sup>

This new government proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville and took

<sup>12</sup> Lamartine, "French Revolution of 1848," Vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>14</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 338.



the direction of the Revolution, but they were not installed without a protest. The leaders of the insurrection had met at the office of *La Réforme*, representing the republicans, the secret societies and the socialists and had formed a ministry composed of Louis Blanc, Armand Marrast, and Flocon. Followed by a large crowd of their adherents, they went to the Hôtel de Ville and forced the Provisional Government to accept these new members, and as the ministers had all been appointed, they were united with them as secretaries. Louis Blanc added another name to the group, that of a workingman named Albert, who had led the insurrection at Lyons in 1834 with the famous device: "Live working, or die fighting."

On the 25th, the Provisional Government proclaimed the republic, but this did not wholly satisfy the multitude of men in arms, composed of socialists and democrats who feared that the Revolution would be "juggled with" in the interest of the bourgeois class as had been done in the Revolution of 1830. The insurgents invaded the Hôtel de Ville under the standard of the red flag, the symbol of the reign of the proletariat, demanding that this flag replace the tricolour which the Provisional Government had adopted. They also demanded that the wealth of the king be put at the disposal of the people and the ministers placed in accusation, and national workshops established. In making this last demand, the leader of the mob, turning imperiously to the ministers, said, "the people who wait will give you one hour to decide." Under this pressure, the government voted to inaugurate the national workshops and appointed a commission to give the order effect. But it required all the tact and eloquence of Lamartine to save the national flag. Pointing to the red flag, he cried out to the people, "As for me, never shall my hand sign this decree! I will refuse, even to death, this flag of blood; and you should repudiate it still more than I! For the red flag which you offer us has only made the tour of the Champ de Mars, drawn through the blood of the people in '91 and in '93; while the tricoloured banner has made the circuit of the world, with the name, the glory, and the liberty of the country." The tricolour flag was adopted, and the democratic republic proclaimed with the device: Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and these words were inscribed on all the monuments of Paris. On the following day Lamartine, advancing to the balustrade of the Hôtel de Ville, read to the assembled multitude this proclamation: "The Provisional Government has only good news to announce to the people. Royalty is abolished; the Republic is proclaimed; the

People exercise their political rights; the workshops of national work are opened for the workers without wages; the army is reorganised. The National Guard indissolubly united with the people to establish order promptly, by the same hand which conquered liberty; finally, the Provisional Government has wished to bring to you itself the last decree which it has decided and signed at this memorable meeting: the abolition of death in political matters."<sup>15</sup>

The same day Thiers and Odilon Barrot gave in their adhesion to the republic and the next day the republic was proclaimed on the Place de la Bastille amid a great concourse of people and the National Guards. Trees of liberty were planted everywhere and blessed by the priests. The people, however, remained under arms, fearing still that in some manner the Revolution might be taken from their control. They covered the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville with cannons levelled, menacing both the Provisional Government and their enemies. It was eight days before the paving-stones were relaid in the streets and many days before all signs of the insurrection disappeared. The socialists had secured for one of their leaders, Caussidière, the appointment to the préfecture of the police and thus controlled the forces for order in Paris.

The Revolution passed through three phases before order was permanently restored and the Constitution of the republic adopted. The first period was marked by the ferment of the working classes and the effort to establish a socialist régime. The Provisional Government represented discordant elements and it was subject to continual interference by delegations representing the socialists and radical republicans. While a majority of the ministers were in sympathy with the bourgeoisie, the masses had a strong representation in Ledru-Rollin, Louis Blanc, and Albert.

On two measures, the government was united and they had much influence in quieting the agitation of the people. First, the establishment of national workshops; second, the institution of eighty battalions of the National Guard who were recruited immediately in Paris and paid one franc and fifty centimes a day. These measures had the effect of providing at once for the men who were thrown out of work by the economic disturbances due to the Revolution. The government also decreed a guarantee of work for all citizens; the right of association for all workers and a gift of a million francs due from the civil list which it said, "is

<sup>15</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 310.

returned to the workers to whom it belonged." Owing to the financial difficulties of the government, this decree remained a dead letter.

But the more the government granted the demands of the socialists and workingmen, the more they demanded from it. On February 27th, a large deputation, representing many thousands of workers, came to the Hôtel de Ville, bearing flags upon which were inscribed the words: "Organisation of Labour—Creation of a ministry of Progress," and demanding the institution of such a ministry at once. Though the Provisional Government was opposed to such a ministry, yet, under the pressure of the multitude, they agreed to form a Commission of Labour with headquarters at the Luxembourg. Then they appointed Louis Blanc, president of the commission and Albert, vice-president. When Louis Blanc announced this decision to the people, he was greeted with cries, "Vive la République," and was carried through the streets on the shoulders of the workers. The same day the government placarded the walls of Paris with this proclamation: "Considering that the Revolution was made by the people, it ought to be made for them; it is time to put an end to the long and iniquitous sufferings of the workers; the question of labour is of supreme importance; there is no higher or more worthy pre-occupation for a Republican government; it belongs above all to France to zealously study and to solve the problem placed to-day among all the industrial nations of Europe; it is necessary to consider it and without the least delay to guarantee to the people the legitimate fruits of their labour."<sup>16</sup>

The appointment of this Commission of Labour reveals to what extent the government was under the control of the workingmen and its readiness to seize upon any scheme which would turn their thoughts to the Luxembourg and the schemes of Louis Blanc. By this means it found a relief from an intolerable situation and gained time to organise its forces; but the relief was only temporary. The socialists kept up an active propaganda among the workingmen and urged them to make new demands tending to the establishment of the socialist régime.

Many journals were started with this purpose and they took the titles of the journals of 1789 and 1793—*La Révolution, le Journal de la Canaille, le Père Duchêne, la République*. They also opened clubs where all the different theories of socialism were debated. Thus Blanqui formed the Club of the Central Republican Society and held meetings in the hall of the Observatory.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 345.

Barbès became president of the Club of the Révolution and was sustained by Ledru-Rollin. Cabet opened a club in a hall on Saint-Honoré. Considérant with the members of the Fourierist school formed plans to propagate their ideas. Legitimists, Bonapartists, students and reactionaries, all had their clubs and all sought to influence the government.

It was not long before the government came into conflict with the clubs. This arose over the date fixed for the elections of deputies for the Constituent Assembly. The socialists wished the elections delayed so that they might have more time to educate the people in their ideas. They held a mass-meeting on the Place de la Concorde and after singing the "Marseillaise," advanced in serried columns on the Hôtel de Ville where they presented their demands to postpone the elections. It was only through the mediation of Louis Blanc that the multitude was controlled and dismissed after the government acceded to the demands of the people. In this instance, as in so many others, the government, which was without an armed force, was compelled to resort to persuasion and flattery of the people. "Proclaimed under fire of combat, in the first moments of victory, the provisional Government saw yesterday its powers confirmed by 200,000 citizens, organised as an army, marching with the calmness of power, and who, by their acclamations, carried moral force and the majesty of sovereignty to our transitory authority. People of Paris, you have been as great in this well-regulated and well-conducted manifestation as you have been courageous on the barricades."<sup>17</sup>

A government which could speak in this tone witnessed to its complete subjection to the working classes. But this submission was nearing its end. The conservative forces were beginning to make their influence felt. The bourgeoisie, struck at first with stupor, awoke to the seriousness of the situation. Under the stress of the financial crisis, they became alarmed and determined to interfere. They first enlisted in large numbers in the National Guard, and when the workingmen and socialists made their great demonstration on April 17th against the government, they rallied to its support. The socialists again organised a manifestation and the people assembled to the number of 100,000 men at the Champ de Mars under the pretext of electing officers of the National Guard and "supporting the government." It was said that the plans of the leaders went much beyond this and that they contemplated overturning the government and proclaiming a

<sup>17</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 349.

Committee of Public Safety with Blanqui, Louis Blanc, and Albert as its members. Hearing these rumours and having no armed force at hand, the Provisional Government gave orders to beat the drums calling the Guard Mobile to arms. The first battalion which approached the Hôtel de Ville was hailed with cries of enthusiasm. This battalion was soon followed by another and then by the National Guards which had recently been reorganised and armed. Soon the whole of the Place de Grève was covered with troops. The government, now feeling itself secure, did not hesitate to prepare to meet the workers in a new attitude.

This fact, however, did not deter the insurgents massed in Champ de Mars from proceeding to the Hôtel de Ville; but when they approached the Place de Grève, they were cut in two columns by a regiment of the National Guards and surrounded on all sides by the other battalions. This dampened the military ardour of the insurgents and they assumed a more pacific tone, and after presenting their petition, they quietly dispersed. The next day the leaders published a manifesto in which they declared that the Revolution had been made by the people and that the people wished a democratic republic and the abolition of the exploitation of man by man and ended by protesting against the employment of troops by the government: "How does it happen that the national guard has been so unusually invoked and in arms, as on a day of danger? How does it happen that on the arrival of our representatives and friends, at the Hôtel de Ville, the citizens, Louis Blanc and Albert, our delegates, received a reception which had every expression of defiance?"

Three days later, the 21st, the Provisional Government issued a proclamation to the people and to the army in which it said: "When Paris is stirring, everything abases itself or disappears before its attitude. Order is guaranteed; family and property are sacred; industries are freed; credit is restored; currency, fleeing from distrust, reappears; labour, the property of the workers, is created by the government, surrounded by institutions protective of the rights of the feeblest and poorest."<sup>18</sup>

This victory established the government on a firm basis, and a few days later it celebrated its triumph by holding a Fête of Flags. More than 40,000 men marched from the head of Champs Elysées to the Bastille and their passing in review lasted all day and well into the night, and as the troops marched by, they cried "Vive la République, Vive le Gouvernement provisoire." Similar demonstration for the government took place in the provinces;

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351. Note.

but at Limoges, the workers who believed in socialism and were under the influence of Pierre Leroux, controlled the city for three weeks, and when authority was restored, it left behind a bitter feeling of hate between the parties.

During these two months, the Commission of Labour had been planning the national workshops. This institution had such a marked effect upon the direction of the Revolution, that it merits attention as to its origin and results. At the first session of the commission on the first of March, 150 to 200 workers had organised themselves as representatives of labour, meeting in the Hall of the Peers. Louis Blanc presented to them his plan for the "organisation of labour." The commission at the Luxembourg now became the centre for deputations of workingmen bringing their complaints and demanding redress. These deputations hampered the work of the administration, and to obviate these difficulties, Louis Blanc instituted an organisation in which each trade should be represented by three delegates who would consider the needs of each class of workers.

It was with large hopes that Louis Blanc had entered upon his work, but unfortunately the assemblies were more concerned with political questions than with the organisation of labour. Nevertheless, he was not discouraged and hoped that the workers would rally to his plan when it was presented to the Assembly of the workers. This was done on April 2d, and his plan was as follows: It emphasised " 'the point of honour in labour' as a substitute for the motive of interest, and as a consequence, an immediate or near equality of wages until the day when they will attain the ideal towards which society must tend, namely, that each will produce according to his ability and consume according to his needs." Louis Blanc also contemplated putting the instruments of production in the hands of the workers; this would mean leaving behind that social state which rests upon 'isolation, antagonism, competition, immorality, disordered amalgam of power by which some succeed only by the incessant destruction of their competitors.' " <sup>19</sup>

"After providing for wages, interest on capital, cost of maintenance and materials," the profits of industry would be divided into four classes.

"A fourth for the extension of capital belonging to the proprietor with whom the State would have treated; a fourth, to set aside a fund for the aged, sick, and injured; a fourth, to be divided among the workers, and a fourth, finally, for the forma-

<sup>19</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 363.

tion of a reserve fund to found other associations. Thus will be constituted the association of the workshop." <sup>20</sup>

Louis Blanc's theories of the organisation of labour were not given a fair trial, as he was opposed by the Minister of the Interior, Marie, who was in sympathy with the bourgeoisie. He made no effort to organise the national workshops so as to offer any chance of success. On the contrary, he organised them in such a way as to discredit the principles of Louis Blanc. Men were given work in the national workshops without regard to fitness or to their trade. The government had ordained that public buildings should be renewed at the cost of the state and had opened workshops for this purpose; but these proved insufficient to meet the demands of the applicants for work. Large numbers of the unemployed came to the mairies of the arrondissements, asking for work or bread. Sometimes they gave them money, but more often they gave them a card for the national workshops. Each day the number of applicants increased, including men of all trades and professions. The numbers became so great that M. Thomas was appointed to form these men into brigades and a decree was passed to establish "a central bureau for the organisation of the national workshops of the Seine." The men enlisted in the shops were 6,000 on March 9th; they increased to 15,000 on the 15th; 30,000 at the end of the month, and they had risen to 100,000 at the end of April; later more than 118,000 were organised into brigades in connection with the national workshops.

It was impossible to find work for this multitude. In the beginning the government had arranged to pay each man two francs a day, but when work could not be found for all, the unemployed received one franc and fifty centimes a day. This institution of a system of doles placed a heavy burden upon the government. One cause of the increase of the applicants for work was that men struck in some particular trade and then went off to the national workshops to be supported by the state as long as the strike lasted. Moreover, the national workshops soon became the centre of political agitation, and M. Thomas organised them as a revolutionary force and came into conflict with the Commission of the Luxembourg. The Commission had taken an active part in the manifestation of March 17th and it had sustained the revolutionary demonstration of April 16th.

Since then, there had been increasing friction between the Commission and the organisers of the national workshops. These

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

differences had been aggravated by the dissensions among the different groups of socialists. Considérant in the *Démocratie Pacifique* had attacked what he called the wanderings of the Commission of the Luxembourg and had advocated a system of his own. These differences broke the unity of the working classes which developed in the elections. The Commission of the Luxembourg drew up a list of candidates in which they advocated the election of only four members of the Provisional Government; namely, Ledru-Rollin, Louis Blanc, Albert and Flocon, together with that of twenty workers. M. Thomas, at the national workshops, opposed this list and paid the workers five francs a day to distribute a million copies of another list in which these four names did not appear. The result was seen at the elections. The Department of the Seine elected Lamartine with 259,800 votes, and Louis Blanc received only 121,140 votes, and of the twenty workers, only one was elected.<sup>21</sup>

Louis Blanc was much chagrined by the results of the elections and cried out to his followers: "The social order is iniquitous, and I swear before God, before my conscience, if ever I am called to regulate the conditions of this iniquitous society, I shall not forget that I have been one of the most unfortunate children of the people and that society has crushed me. And I have vowed against this social order which renders unhappy so great a number of our brothers, the oath of Hannibal."<sup>22</sup>

With the meeting of the National Assembly on May 2, 1848, the second stage of the Revolution opens. It was evident from the beginning of the first session that the majority of the deputies were determined to check the propaganda and depredations of the socialists. Their first concern, however, was with the Commission of the Luxembourg and the national workshops. On May 9th, the Assembly dismissed from the commission Louis Blanc, and Albert and the commission ceased to exist a few days later. At the same time, the Assembly appointed a commission from its members to consider the conditions of labour and to investigate the national workshops. This action of the National Assembly alarmed the socialists and they determined to arouse the workers to insurrection. The revolutionary leaders, Blanqui, Raspail, and Barbès, took for a pretext for invading the Assembly an interpellation of Wolonski on Poland and raised the cry among the insurgents, "Vive Louis Blanc, Le Ministre du Travail!"

<sup>21</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 369.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.



though Louis Blanc had discouraged the insurrection and deprecated its revolutionary actions. Nevertheless the socialist leaders carried out their plan, and owing to the weakness of the National Guard under a general who connived at the insurrection, the socialists forced their way into the Assembly, presented their petition, and declared the Assembly dissolved. Next they proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, where for one hour they held the reins of government. During this time, Barbès issued two decrees: the first reads: "The people having dissolved the National Assembly, there remains no power but that of the people itself. Consequently, the People having shown its desire to have for a Provisional Government, citizens Louis Blanc, Albert, Ledru-Rollin, Barbès, Raspail, Pierre Leroux, and Thoré, these citizens are named members of the Commission of the Government." Citizen Caussidière is retained as delegate of the Republic at the préfecture of the police. The National Guard is ordered to return to its quarters." Second decree: "The Provisional Government, observing the desire of the people, declares that it will immediately convey to the Russian and German Governments the order at once to reconstitute Poland; and, if these Governments fail to comply the Government of the Republic will at once declare war upon them."<sup>23</sup>

The National Guards now intervened, dispersing the crowds and arresting Barbès and the other leaders of the insurrection. If the insurrection had been successful, there is no doubt that it would have been followed by the establishment of the socialist régime. A number of decrees had been prepared for this emergency, one of which would have ordered the laying "a surtax upon the rich, the proceeds of which would have been used to meet the necessities of the poor."

This insurrection frightened the bourgeoisie and increased the reactionary tendencies in the Assembly, and it determined to deal severely with the national workshops which had become centres of revolutionary agitation. Falloux made his report for the Commission of Labour and attacked the workshops, saying, "It is organised war; it is a camp of insurrection." And later in the Assembly, he said: "Our care is to propose to you the substitution of work by the piece for labour by the day; that is to say, a just proportion between the product and the wages. The National workshops, we cannot conceal it from you, are to-day, from the industrial point of view, only a permanent strike organised at 170,000 francs a day, or 45 millions per year; from the political

<sup>23</sup> Postgate, "Revolution," p. 209.

point of view, they are an active foyer of menacing agitation; from the financial point of view, a daily and flagrant waste; from the moral point of view, the most grievous alteration in the pure and glorious character of the worker."<sup>24</sup>

The plan for the substitution of piece-work for the daily wage was decided the same day and also that for dismissing the workers, not domiciled in Paris, to their homes in the country. The Assembly voted to take a census of all the workers in the national workshops and the next day published in the *Moniteur* a decree, ordering all workers between 17 and 25 years of age, to enlist in the army and, if they refused, they would no longer be received at the workshops. The Assembly also ordered that a large number of the workers in the shops of Paris be transferred to the public works in the provinces. This was the signal for the insurrection. The socialist journals thundered against reaction and accused the National Assembly of designs to destroy the republic. At the clubs and in the sections of Paris where the workers lived, there was much agitation and preparations were made for an insurrection on the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, July 14th. But the workers of the national workshops were not to be restrained; they demanded immediate action. Many ran through the streets, singing the "Marseillaise" and some even cried, "Vive Napoleon!" The following day, the people assembled in vast crowds on the Place du Panthéon, but were held back by the National Guards from the vicinity of the Palais Bourbon and the Luxembourg. Then the disturbance spread to the faubourgs of Saint-Marceau and Saint-Antoine. The workers took arms and carried a banner on which were inscribed the words: "Ateliers nationaux, xii arrondissement." The revolutionary army was composed of two wings, one of the Social Democrats, and the other of the Legitimists and Bonapartists who hoped to profit by the insurrection. Firing commenced at mid-day and the insurgents made some progress and drove back the National Guards near the Hôtel de Ville, but were defeated at other points. The struggle seemed to be indecisive until the Assembly appointed General Cavaignac dictator, and, aided by the National Guards from the provinces, he gradually drove back the insurgents, and with powerful artillery, demolished the barricades in the Saint-Antoine district where the strength of the insurrection was centred. With the fall of this barricade, the insurrection came to an end, and Cavaignac sent word to the Assembly that "order has triumphed over anarchy" and resigned

<sup>24</sup> Levasseur, "Histoire des Classes Ouvrières," Vol. II, 388.

his dictatorship. This was one of the bloodiest insurrections which had ever taken place in Paris. The army of the Assembly lost 1,500 men, besides two deputies, seven generals, and the Archbishop of Paris. On the insurgent side, the loss was estimated at 12,000. English journals estimated the loss at 50,000. The exact losses were uncertain, but after the victory, 3,376 of the insurgents were deported to the colony of Algiers. "Never had a Parisian insurrection," writes Levasseur, "up till then cost so much blood and caused so much mourning. This had left behind bitter memories and rankling hate in the working masses of Paris and in all the revolutionary party."<sup>25</sup>

With the destruction of the insurrection and the restoration of order, the Revolution now entered upon its final stage, and from this period, the interest centres in the work of the National Assembly. It took up the great question for which it had been called together, the making of the Constitution. While the republican majority was opposed to socialism, yet it still looked with favour upon liberal measures in the interests of the working classes. The socialist deputies, Considérant, Pierre Leroux, and Proudhon, endeavoured to present their theories before the Assembly, but the members were restless under the exposition of their views and treated their theories of the reconstruction of society with ridicule.

Nevertheless the question of the right to work was one that commanded the support of many members and occupied the attention of the Assembly for four days in September. These debates were long and tempestuous and many deputies spoke at the tribune. On this question, the liberals and socialists united and urged as a principle of the Constitution, "The right of all citizens to instruction, to labour and to assistance." When the Right side showed a disposition to shelve this question, De Tocqueville exclaimed at the tribune, "Yes, gentlemen, it is necessary that sooner or later this question of socialism, which every one fears and which no one until now has dared to treat, should finally come before this tribune; it is necessary that this Assembly decide. It is necessary that we deliver the country from the weight which this thought of socialism has made fall, so to speak, on its breast."<sup>26</sup>

In this frame of mind, the Assembly debated the question and its final decision was only reached after some days. Faucher, the

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

economist, characterised the "right of labour" as a bastard socialism." Ledru-Rollin thought that it was a necessary consequence of the Revolution of February. "They say, the Right of Labour, that is socialism; I reply, 'No, the Right of Labour, that is the Republic applied.'" Another leader of the Liberal party said, "If the deposed Government had been more preoccupied with the working class, it was certain that hostilities would not have been so active against it. The best government for us, the people say, is that which renders life a little more tolerable for us."

• But the advocates of the right of labour were in the minority. Thiers expressed the views of the majority when he said, in replying to the idea of honour as the motive among the workers which Louis Blanc had raised, "You will only make a society of idlers and slaves. They will not work for the community. You can say to a man, die for your country; but say to him, weave thread or forge iron for your country, and you will see that he will not listen to you."<sup>27</sup>

The amendment on the Right of Labour was defeated by a vote of 596 to 187. And on the second reading, only 86 voted for the amendment. At the same time, in view of the sympathy which still existed for the labouring class, the Assembly voted later to form a committee of 36 to make an inquiry into the conditions of the working classes.

The Constitution was proclaimed on November 4, 1848. Its second article reads, "The French Republic is democratic, one and indivisible." This word "democratic" was inserted because it had been charged that the bourgeoisie had desired an aristocratic republic.<sup>28</sup>

The fourth article consecrated the device: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. It guaranteed "the family, labour, property, public order" as the basis of the new government. The Constitution sanctioned a Legislative Assembly elected for three years by universal suffrage; a Council of State elected by the Assembly; and conferred upon the Assembly the legislative power and the right of declaring war and ratifying treaties. The president was elected for four years and was responsible and shared with the Assembly the initiative in making the laws as well as in their execution, and he had the right of disposing the troops, but not commanding them. He was eligible for re-election only after four years.

The Constitution had created two co-ordinate powers, the

<sup>27</sup> Levasseur, Vol. II, p. 406.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 424.

Assembly and the president, and its practical working depended upon the harmony between these two powers.

The crisis in the history of the republic turned on the election of the president. There were three candidates; namely, Louis Napoleon, representing the Legitimists or monarchists, the forces of reaction, and the socialists who had been won over to his cause by the propaganda of the Bonapartists, who had exploited the book of Louis Napoleon on the "Extinction of Poverty." The Legitimists thought that Napoleon was a weak man who could be induced to accept their leadership and the socialists thought that he would champion the cause of the workers. The republicans put up Cavaignac, the general who had put down the insurrection in the days of June. The *Mountain* and other radicals placed Ledru-Rollin in nomination. Louis Napoleon was elected by 5,434,216 votes against 1,448,107 for Cavaignac. Ledru-Rollin only received some hundred thousand votes.

It was a triumph for the forces of reaction. Louis Napoleon had been elected by the peasants under the control of the priests and by the monarchical parties which detested socialism and were opposed to both the republicans and the democrats. This election sealed the fate of the republic, and with it the Revolution of 1848 ends. After this, the Assembly passed very little legislation of importance, and through the mechanisms of the followers of the president, its end was hastened and it terminated its labours on March 31, 1849.

The Revolution of 1848 had brought to the front the great questions which played a large part in the development of democracy—the principles of universal suffrage and problems of the labouring classes. The principle of universal suffrage was recognised under the Empire and was used by Napoleon to establish his arbitrary power and found the Empire. The second question of the working classes forced itself to the front later and became the concern of even conservative statesmen. However reactionary the government, or antagonistic the bourgeois classes, the problems of the working classes forced themselves more and more into the foreground of political questions. The crushing of the socialists and the defeat of the republicans was only temporary. It set back the democratic movement, but did not crush it. The march of events, the force of democratic ideas, and the development of economic forces finally swept aside all obstacles in the path of democracy and compelled the government, later, to recognise the principles which had come to light in the Revolution of 1848.

## CHAPTER X

### REACTION AGAINST DEMOCRACY: THE EMPIRE

THE election of Louis Napoleon to the presidency on December 10, 1848, was the triumph of party reaction and of order. He had been elected by a combination of the monarchical parties united with the peasants of the country who had been thrown into opposition by the tax of forty-five centimes and the excesses of the democrats. The majority in the cities was still republican. Louis Napoleon had selected his ministry among the conservatives and soon came into conflict with the republican majority which dominated the Assembly. On January 26th, the ministry introduced a bill restricting the clubs which it held were "a state within a state." This measure evoked an animated discussion during which Ledru-Rollin moved to put the ministers in accusation and was supported by the clubs; the motion failed to pass. During this time the government had ordered the disbanding of the Mobile Guard, and this, with its action against the clubs, created an agitation which would have developed into an insurrection on the 29th, had it not been for the strong measures taken by the government under General Changarnier. He had said at the time, "It would be as easy to establish the Empire as to make a cornucopia of bonbons." This gave rise to fear of a coup d'état. Indeed, the Assembly became alarmed and was only quieted when the ministry gave its assurance that it would not lend itself to such a plan. However, there was evidence that the democrats were extending their influence. A society called the "Republican Solidarity" was extending its ramifications throughout France and the growing opposition between the president and the Assembly was creating alarm among the conservative classes of the country. Petitions poured into the departments, demanding the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and M. Rateau made a motion to this effect early in March. Finally, the Assembly under pressure of public opinion voted to dissolve on May 13, 1849. In the meantime the presi-

dent had been gaining in popularity and at his first review of the army at Paris, had been received with cries of "Vive Napoleon! Vive l'Empereur!" The republican forces were weakening and the reaction was increasing. The election for the Legislative Assembly was a great victory for the party of order. The Assembly met on May 28th, the day after the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. The realignment of parties was seen in the election of the president of the Legislative Assembly, composed of 750 members. Out of 603 voting, the monarchists of all shades of opinion polled 345 votes, the moderate republicans 76, and Ledru-Rollin, representing the extreme republicans, democrats, and socialists—the Mountain—polled 183 votes. It was evident that the republicans, who formed a majority in the last Assembly, were now only a small minority. The party of order now united with the president to crush the republicans and the Mountain. In the closing days of the Constituent Assembly, it had shown a violent hostility to the president's policy in sending troops to Rome. Ledru-Rollin had demanded the impeachment of the ministry, but he failed to obtain a majority for his motion. In consequence of this debate in the Assembly, Léon Faucher, Minister of the Interior, issued a message to the country in which he said: "After a most animated debate on the affairs of Italy, the National Assembly has rejected, by a majority of 329 as against 292, the motion of M. Jules Favre, to declare that the Ministry had lost the confidence of the country. This vote consolidated the public peace; the agitators only awaited a vote hostile to the Ministry to rush to the barricades, and to re-enact the days of June. Paris is quiet."<sup>1</sup>

The Assembly had been dissolved, leaving the Roman question undecided, and it became the burning question among the republicans at the opening of the new Assembly. The monarchist and reactionary majority, however, determined to crush the republicans and socialists and proposed measures limiting the freedom of the press and the activity of the clubs. The socialist parties, however, were not behind hand in organising a movement in opposition. They formed a coalition with the Mountain and made an appeal to all democrats to save the republic. They had formed during the elections to the Legislative Assembly, committees, the "Friends of the Constitution and the Republican Union," and promised certain social reforms. The programme of the Mountain written by Felix Pyat advocated the "Right of property by the right of labour," and demanded "a progressive

<sup>1</sup> De Maupas, "The History of the Coup d'Etat," p. 37.

and proportional tax on net incomes, and government control of railroads, mines, canals, and insurance." This programme is of much interest, as it is that which democracy advocated and carried out in its later development. The propaganda of the socialists continued to gain adherents and was strengthening itself especially in the industrial centres.

"Socialism," writes a contemporary, "above all, was eager to retrieve its successive defeats. The Mountain, which in the Chamber represented its doctrines, its interests, and its passions, was summoned every day by the secret societies and the most ardent demagogues to give the signal for a call to arms. To decide this it only required a pretext; and this pretext the Mountain imagined to have found in the Roman question."<sup>2</sup>

The conflict began on this issue, and Ledru-Rollin moved in the Assembly the impeachment of the ministers and at the same time gave the signal for insurrection. The democratic press took up "the call to arms" and the revolutionary masses began to move, descended from the faubourgs, formed into ranks, and marched in serried columns on the Assembly to "dictate to it their laws." As the Hôtel de Ville was strongly occupied by troops, the rallying point was chosen at the Conservatory of Arts and Industry. The National Guard co-operated with the insurgents, and Colonel Guimard, who commanded the artillery, escorted the representatives of the Mountain; barricades were quickly raised, and it looked as though the insurrection would assume formidable proportions. The insurgents placarded certain sections of the city with this announcement: "To the French people; to the National Guard and to the Army." "The Constitution is being violated, the people are rising to defend it. The Mountain is at its post. Vive la République! Vive la Constitution!" This appeal was signed by 129 members of the Mountain.

General Changarnier had taken all precautions and had massed large bodies of troops. The Conservatory of Trades was surrounded and the barricades were taken at the point of the bayonet. When the troops entered the Conservatory, the leaders of the insurrection fled through the windows. Ledru-Rollin made his exit by this means and in a few days escaped to England. Had the insurrection been successful there would have been risings in all the principal towns of France. In fact, at Rheims, Dijon, Lyons, and Toulouse partial attempts were made

<sup>2</sup> De Maupas, p. 40.



at insurrection in accordance with an understanding with the insurgents at Paris.

This appeal to arms led to energetic measures by the Legislative Assembly. Paris was declared in a state of siege and repressive measures relating to the press and the clubs were hurried through the Assembly, and a bill was passed forbidding public political meetings. Louis Napoleon traversed the boulevards of Paris after the victory and was received with enthusiasm and with cries of "Vive Napoleon! Vive l'Empereur!" It was said that that day he might have introduced the empire.

The increasing popularity of the president gave umbrage to the majority of the Assembly and the harmony which had existed between them began to be broken now that the republicans were crushed. General Changarnier went over to the side of the monarchists and they began to scheme how they might restore the monarchy; but the division between the Legitimist and Orleanist adherents prevented any unity of action. To counteract their plots, Napoleon made a tour of the country, everywhere speaking on the necessity of order and unity of the French nation. He spoke at Chartres on July 6, 1849; then at Ham, Angers, Nantes, Saumur, and finally at Tours, where he gave expression to his personal policy and his desire for a revision of the Constitution. "Our laws," he said, "may be more or less defective, but they are susceptible of improvement. Therefore trust to the future, without concerning yourselves about Coups d'État or insurrections: there is no pretext for the former; the latter stand not the least chance of success." "I give myself wholly to you to govern with the Constitution; but on the condition of a revision which shall give back to France the free exercise of her will, which shall enable her to choose her Chief as she likes, and where she likes, and which shall attempt no violence to her preferences by an iniquitous exclusion or a premeditated ostracism."<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with his new policy, the president changed his ministry on October 31, 1849, and appointed a ministry more in harmony with his personal views. The change of ministry came upon the Assembly like a "Bombshell and caused consternation in the camp of the monarchists." It involved, too, a change in the personnel of the departments. Up to this time, the prefectures had been occupied by men who were in sympathy with General Cavaignac and republican ideas. Now the prefects were

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

chosen for their loyalty to the Bonapartist party and this gave to Louis Napoleon another grip upon the country.

This change opened the eyes of the republicans, who had been inclined to look with favour upon the president since he had broken his alliance with the monarchist party, but now they divined his purpose. When the ministry, on January 12th, carried through in conjunction with the reactionaries a law to bring the university and the schools under the control of the clergy and when the president founded 267 ecclesiastical schools and put them under the bishops, he further antagonised the Democratic party. Indeed, the drift of his policy was clearly revealed when he allowed the police of Paris to cut down the trees of liberty. This created some disturbance among the workers and the National Guard; but their protest was without effect. The socialists, who had been inclined to look upon Napoleon with favour, now broke with him completely. At the partial election held at Paris on the 10th of March, 1850, the coalition of republicans and socialists elected one republican, Carnot; and two socialists, Vidal and DeFlotte, who had been the leaders of the barricade in 1848. This election alarmed the bourgeoisie, and the Assembly determined to limit the franchise and check the growing power of the democracy. They passed a law to this effect on May 31, 1850, amid a great deployment of troops. This law demanded that an elector should "be domiciled for three years in the same canton; the establishment of domicile would be furnished by the fiscal proof of his personal tax."

The republican, De Bourges, protested against this law, holding that it was an incitement to civil war. Thiers, who favoured it, in the course of the debate let the words escape him, the "Vile multitude," and Baroche designated the Revolution of 1848 as a "catastrophe."<sup>4</sup> The law had the effect of disfranchising more than three millions of voters. But the forces of reaction did not stop here. They demanded further restrictions and their aim was to put the republicans beyond the pale of political power. In June, the Assembly passed laws enacting the law passed June 19, 1849, after the insurrection, for one year; a law giving the government the right to forbid electoral assemblies; a law on deportations; a law imposing a tax on journals; a law enacting more security for the press, and obliging the editors to sign all articles, which destroyed their influence and limited their power. These laws were justified on the ground that they would elevate the tone of the journals. While these laws served

<sup>4</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté," Vol. II, p. 65.

to make the Assembly very unpopular with republicans of all shades, it was known that Napoleon did not favour the limitation of the franchise, as he believed in universal suffrage and hoped to use it as a means of mounting to power.

The summer only served to deepen the antagonism between the Assembly and the President. The monarchical parties began to plot the restoration of the monarchy. The Legitimists went on a pilgrimage to the Count de Chambord at Wiesbaden and the Orleanists made a great demonstration at the funeral of Louis Philippe who died at Claremont. It was proposed to combine the royalist forces; but the Count de Chambord, the heir of the Legitimist throne, would not agree to it. Nevertheless, General Changarnier now threw his influence on the side of the monarchist majority in the Assembly and it was evident that they hoped for a royalist reaction at the next presidential election. In the meantime, Napoleon made another tour of the country, and at Lyons he uttered these significant words: "If culpable pretensions were revived once more, and threatened to endanger the tranquillity of France, I should know how to reduce them by invoking again the sovereign will of the country; because I deny any one the right to call himself her representative more than I." At Rheims he also said: "Our country's only desire is towards order, religion, and prudent liberty. I have been able to convince myself that everywhere the number of agitators is infinitely small and the number of good citizens infinitely great. Let us pray to Heaven that they may not be divided. It is because of this that when I find myself to-day in this ancient city of Rheims, whither Kings, who also had the interests of nations at heart, came to be crowned, I could wish to see an idea crowned, instead of a man—the idea of union and conciliation, the triumph of which would bring tranquillity back to our country, already great by her riches, her virtues, and her faith."<sup>5</sup>

And at Caen, he went further and revealed the policy which would dominate his future actions: "If stormy days were to come again, and the nation wished to impose a new burden on the chief of the Government, that chief would be very guilty to desert this high trust."<sup>6</sup>

His demand, then, was a revision of the Constitution and especially the clause forbidding the re-eligibility of the president and also an appeal to the people through universal suffrage. At a review of the troops at Satory in October, the cavalry regi-

<sup>5</sup> De Maupas, "History of the Coup d'Etat," p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

ments greeted Napoleon with cries of "Vive Napoleon! Vive l'Empereur!" but the infantry regiments marched past in silence. This was due to an order of General Neumayer, who was a devoted friend of General Changarnier. The president was much incensed when he found the cause of that silence and he cashiered the general.

The Assembly met in November and the controversy with the president was at a white heat. His adherents counselled a coup d'état; but he discarded the idea and was still bent on a policy of conciliation and hoped to secure by legal means a revision of the Constitution. The year 1851 turned around this question of the revision of the Constitution, and the issue raised, culminated in the coup d'état of December.

At the opening of the session of the Assembly, January 12, 1851, the president in his message said: "A considerable number of the Councils-General have expressed their wish for the revision of the Constitution. This wish solely concerns the Legislative Power. As for me, elected by the people, deriving my authority from them only, I shall always conform to their wishes, if lawfully expressed. The uncertainty of the future has, I know, given rise to many apprehensions, has awakened many hopes. Let us try to sacrifice those hopes to the country, and only to occupy ourselves with her welfare. If in this session you vote the revision of the Constitution, a Constituent Assembly will be called to remodel our fundamental laws, and to regulate the attributes of the Executive Power. If you do not vote it, the people will solemnly express their will again in 1852. But whatever the solutions with regard to the future may be, let us endeavour to understand each other."<sup>7</sup>

But the removal of General Changarnier from his command removed all hope of reconciliation with the Assembly. The general had been trying to seduce the army officers, and it was said that he planned to seize the president and imprison him at Vincennes and then restore the monarchy. However, his removal created a storm in the Assembly and the bitterness of the opposition increased against the president. Thiers, one of his opponents, made his famous speech in which he said: "There are moments when fears may be entertained for the safety of the supreme power. To-day public opinion is tending towards the supreme power; no fears need be felt for its safety. There is nothing to confront it but the Assembly, which, after all, possesses but a moral influence. If it gives in, there is an end of it;

<sup>7</sup> De Maupas, p. 94.

it disappears, and there remains only one power. After the fact, the name itself will come when it is wanted. L'Empire est fait."<sup>8</sup>

At the end of three days' debate, the ministry was defeated by 417 votes to 278. As it was impossible from the divided state of the Assembly to secure a ministry supported by the majority, the president formed a ministry from his personal followers. There was now war between the Assembly and the new ministry. The president asked for an increase of the civil list; the Assembly refused it. The Assembly was divided into three irreconcilable factions: first, the president's party; secondly, the coalition of the monarchists; thirdly, the republicans. There was no majority which could control the Assembly. Measures were passed or defeated by coalition of the different groups. The Orleanists desired the abrogation of the law decreeing the exile of the princes of the Orleans family. It was defeated by a coalition of the Bonapartists and Legitimists. But the great question at issue was the revision of the Constitution. The government had been busy stirring up the departments to send petitions to the Assembly, demanding the revision. Napoleon at Dijon, on June 1st, made an address in which he warned the Assembly of his unalterable purpose to obtain a revision of the Constitution in his interest. "Since I acceded to power," he said, "I flatter myself to have proved how, in the presence of the supreme interests of society, I can waive all considerations of self. The most violent and unjust attacks have not exhausted my patience. Whatever duties the country may impose upon me, she will find me ready to obey her will; and be assured, gentlemen, that France shall not perish in my hands."<sup>9</sup>

This address at Dijon served to irritate the Assembly and produced a violent discussion. General Changarnier, replying to the Minister of War, said "The soldier will always obey the voice of the chief, but no one will induce our soldiers to march against the laws and against this Assembly. Not a battalion, not a squad, will be enticed into this fatal path; because they would be confronted by their chiefs whom they are in the habit of following into the path of duty and honour. Mandatories of France, you may deliberate in peace."<sup>10</sup>

This was a boastful utterance, but it revealed the fear of the Assembly of a coup d'état.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

The chairman of the committee on Revision, De Tocqueville, brought in his report on June 25th; and July 14th was set aside for its debate. This lasted six days. It was marked by its heat and passion, during which many deputies took part. Thiers had said that "the Republic is the régime that divides us least." M. de Falloux took issue with this statement, saying, "The Republic is not the régime that divides us least; it is the régime that enables us to remain divided, which is a different thing; it is the régime which allows us to remain divided against each other—loyally, honourably, conveniently as far as we have gone. But to-morrow this may perhaps no longer be the case." And after pointing out the dangers of this division, he appealed to all patriotic men to unite, saying that the Red Spectre is only to be dreaded because the Conservatives are divided among themselves. General Cavaignac opposed revision, believing that "the Republic is a right and indisputable one." He feared revision, as it would only be a stepping-stone for the ambition of the president. M. Pascal Duprat, who represented the Mountain, opposed revision and raised the threat of Revolution: "Well, and what is it that is proposed to you to-day? To resist this irresistible force. Take care; do not compel by imprudent measures—do not compel this sovereign force to assume its battle-name and call itself, once more, the Revolution." This menace was received with frenzied applause by the deputies of the Mountain. It revealed too clearly the hopes of the democrats to overthrow the forces of reaction in the coming elections of 1852.

The government, through its minister, M. Baroche, pleaded for the revision, concluding with these words, "Remember the enormous responsibility you incur if you reject this demand for revision, which, in my opinion, will satisfy the true needs, the genuine wants, the real wish of the whole of the nation."<sup>11</sup> As three-fourths of the votes, 543, were required for a revision of the Constitution, the measure was lost, though a majority, 446, voted for it and 278 against it. And the Assembly accompanied this vote by passing the following resolution: "The National Assembly, while regretting that in certain localities the Administration, contrary to its duties, has used its influence to incite the citizens to petition, orders all further petitions to be deposited with the Committee of Preliminary Inquiry."<sup>12</sup>

From this time, Louis Napoleon began to plan the coup d'état and waited for a favourable opportunity to put it in operation.

<sup>11</sup> De Maupas, p. 125.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

On the other hand, the republicans and socialists were planning another insurrection. Their activities in the south-west are thus described by De Maupas, prefect at Toulouse at this period. "In the south-west the agitation was at fever heat. The advent of 1852 was regarded by all the demagogues as the period for a general uprising. They prepared for it with very little mystery. The end to be gained was in no way disguised. They were determined to revive a Revolution that had failed in 1848, one that had been diverted from its original purpose on the 10th of December, by the thorough victory of the social revolution. Their organisation was powerful. The secret societies were properly constituted; their ramifications extended to the most distant communes, the most out-of-the-way hamlets. The leaders were everywhere men of action, ready to give the signal for every excess; it was an army in good form, eager to march at the word of command. In the camp of those implacable foes of society there was a complete unity. Unfortunately, facing those vigorously disciplined forces, there was a divided Conservative party, divided throughout the country as it was in the Chamber. Consequently the public mind began to grow uneasy."<sup>13</sup>

The centre of this movement was at Lyons and Paris. Under cover of this revolutionary agitation, Louis Napoleon justified his coup d'état and determined to execute it, unless he could obtain a revision of the Constitution in his favour and the return to universal suffrage which would have allayed the agitation. The Mountain was appealing to the three million of disfranchised voters to incite them to insurrection. But the fear of Napoleon determined the majority of the monarchists to refuse all revision. At the opening of the session of the Assembly in November, they introduced the bill of the Quæstors which aimed to put the military forces of Paris and the nation under the control of the president of the Assembly. This had been one of the old rules of the Assembly of 1848, but had not been reaffirmed in the Legislative Assembly. If this Assembly could restore this rule, it would remove the army from the control of the president of the republic. The measure proposed was this:

"Shall be promulgated as henceforth pertaining to the law, and inserted in the order of the day to the army, and posted up in all barracks, article 6 of the Decree of the 11th of May, 1848, worded as here below. Article one; the President of the National Assembly is charged with the security of the Assembly within. In pursuance of which he shall have the right to sum-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

mons such military forces and all other authorities whose co-operation he may judge necessary. The requisition may be addressed directly to all officers, commanders, or functionaries, who are bound to comply with them immediately, under penalties provided by the law.”<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the debate on this measure, the Minister of War replied to an interpellation: “As I have the honour of telling you, the decree of the 11th May, 1848, having fallen into decay, never having been executed, was no longer posted up except in a small number of barracks. I did not wish to leave the troops a pretext for doubt and hesitation; I have had it removed, from where it still remained.”<sup>15</sup>

This reply created great excitement and the Assembly was thrown into confusion. The cry was raised by some deputies, “I demand impeachment,” and the leaders of the Left demanded impeachment and urged their followers to vote it. The *Moniteur* said: “The Assembly becomes altogether past control, and the ushers cannot prevail upon the members to return to their seats.” But in spite of the excitement, the bill was thrown out by 408 votes to 300. The more moderate men and some members of the Right united with the republicans who feared a monarchist coup d'état. This vote, however, did not heal the breach between the monarchists and the president. Conditions remained very strained and a conflict seemed imminent. In the event of such a collision, the Mountain and the socialists hoped to profit by it and create a Revolution in their favour. The secret societies were very active and the leaders were watching an opportunity for an uprising. On the 24th of November, M. de Cassagnac, who was the editorial mouthpiece of Napoleon, published an article which foreshadowed the coup d'état. He openly charged the chiefs of the Legitimist and Orleanist parties with conspiring to seize the power. “This conspiracy has been organised for the last eighteen months; and at the time when a notable general occupied the Tuileries, its drawing-rooms were the meeting-place of a number of eminent political personages, who debated the arrest of Louis Napoleon and his impounding at Vincennes. There can be no doubt upon this subject. A former Prime Minister of Louis Philippe, who was present at those meetings, warned the president of the republic of what was being plotted against him. The conspirators' aim is to create a dictatorship, to govern with the support and under the control of the actual Assembly,

<sup>14</sup> De Maupas, p. 199.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.



which would be indefinitely continued under its new appellation of the Convention. The dictator is pointed out by everybody; it is General Changarnier."<sup>16</sup>

This article created a great sensation and a war of the journals ensued; the governmental organs asked that the government be delivered from this menace and the republican journals openly preached civil war. However the article may be looked upon as the justification of the coup d'état which Napoleon had planned for December 2d. His first step was to seize the leaders, both monarchical and republican alike, in the early hours of the morning of December 2d, and send them to prison. When Paris woke up it found the city filled with troops placed at all strategic points, and placards on the walls announcing in five articles the following:

"The National Assembly is dissolved. Universal suffrage is re-established. The Law of the 31st of May is repealed. The French people are convoked in their constituencies from the 14th of December to the 21st of December following. A state of siege is decreed throughout the first military division. The Minister of the Interior is charged with the execution of this decree. Given at the Palace of the Elysée, the 2d December, 1851.

"Louis Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Minister of the Interior, De Morny."

There was also a proclamation to the army and another to the French people. In this the president said: "Convinced that the instability of power and the preponderance of a single Assembly are the permanent causes of trouble and discord, I submit to your suffrages the fundamental bases of a Constitution to be developed subsequently by the Assemblies"; then followed the propositions of a president to be elected for ten years; a Council of State to prepare laws; and a Legislative Body elected without secret ballot.

The Palais Bourbon, the place of meeting of the Assembly, was occupied by troops, and the deputies still at liberty endeavoured to enter the hall, but were repulsed by the soldiers, and met in another building to the number of 216 and passed this decree: "Louis Napoleon has forfeited his function of president of the Republic. All citizens are bound to refuse him obedience; the Executive power devolves by right to the National Assembly." But immediately they were arrested and conveyed to prison. Other deputies attempted to arouse the people, but with little success. The next day a few barricades were erected,

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

but were captured by the troops. In the evening the troops were withdrawn to their barracks. Then the people who had been restless commenced to gather and in the night a formidable insurrection developed.

The next morning, barricades were erected in the centre and east of Paris and the faubourg of Saint-Antoine became the centre of the movement. At mid-day the barricades were attacked by troops and finally carried after three hours of severe fighting; the number killed on both sides was estimated by the prefect of police as 209 and 299 wounded. Napoleon was now master of Paris. In the provinces there had been some uprisings in the east and south-east accompanied with some barbarities by the peasants so that the government designated these attempts at insurrection as a rising of the "Jacquerie." The plebiscite on December 14th established Louis Napoleon's power. He was elected president by 7,439,216 ayes against 640,733 noes. The conservative party, the clergy, and the peasants had rallied to him.

With this confirmation of the country, the president assumed dictatorial power and issued a Constitution in January 1852, appointed the members of the Senate, and fixed the day for the elections for the Legislative Assembly which met on March 29, 1852. The Constitution was modelled after that of 1804, and while it retained the form of a republican government, it really invested all the power in the hands of a single man. The chief of state commanded the army and navy, made all treaties, of alliance and of commerce, had the initiative of all laws and their execution, and by his power of appointment of the senators controlled that body and also the Legislative Assembly by depriving it of the right of the tribune, and all initiative of the laws. The first article of the Constitution recognised, confirmed, and guaranteed the great principles proclaimed in 1789, and which are the base of French public right; such as individual liberty, inviolability of domicile, secret correspondence, liberty of religion, civil equality, right of meeting, and liberty of the press. But these principles were not respected and were violated by the government in the interest of order.

Napoleon now made a tour of the country and visited the principal cities. He was everywhere received with enthusiasm by the party of order, and at the first city he visited, Bourges, the army hailed him with cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" and the cry was caught up by the multitude. He ended his tour at Bordeaux where he replied to the enthusiasm, "The Empire is peace."

An agitation now commenced favoured by the administration, by the army, by the clergy, and by the departments of the Midi and the centre for the establishment of the empire. Louis Napoleon proposed it to the Senate and then submitted it to a plebiscite based on universal suffrage. The vote recorded for the empire was 7,839,522; 254,501 against; and 2,062,795 abstained from voting. These were the liberals and republicans who would not take the oath to the president or who had been deprived of the vote by political reasons.

Reaction was now complete, and the republicans and democrats among the people of the cities and the liberal bourgeoisie were reduced to silence. The socialists seemed to have lost all influence among the masses. Louis Reybaud in the "*Dictionnaire de l'économie politique*," wrote: "Socialism is dead; to speak of it, is to pronounce a funeral oration." This was a view generally held at that time and the conservative classes congratulated themselves that socialism would no longer disturb the public peace.

The new régime of the empire established the forces of reaction on a firm basis. Its first period was marked by the spirit of autocracy and repression. Workingmen's associations were dissolved; the press was put on severe restrictions; the National Guards were refused the right to elect their own officers; and the leaders of the liberal, republican, and socialist parties were either arrested or deported to a colony, or exiled from the country. "According to a document discovered in the Tuileries in 1870, there were 26,642 persons arrested and only 6,500 released; 5,108 were made subject to police supervision, and 15,033 condemned (of whom 9,530 were transplanted to Algeria, 239 to Cayenne after a long time on the pontoons, 2,804 confined in a French city). Eighty representatives, almost all Republicans, were banished."<sup>17</sup>

By these measures Napoleon had succeeded in destroying political life in France. While political institutions existed, with a Chamber, with elections, and with a press, they preserved only the forms of liberty. Everything was determined by the will of the emperor. The government depended upon the army which had established the throne and maintained its power; on the bourgeoisie who were tired of politics and were satisfied with a régime that restored and fostered their commercial interests; upon the clergy which supported the new régime because it placed public instruction in their hands.

<sup>17</sup> Seignobos, "Political History," p. 171.

The foreign policy of the empire pleased the nation, and the Crimean War added to the glory of the Empire, and raised the prestige of the emperor when he dictated to Europe at the treaty of Paris in 1856. The elections were under the control of the government, and though based upon universal suffrage, they were guided and controlled by the prefects of the departments. The republicans abstained from voting because they would not take the personal oath to the emperor. So arbitrary were the acts of the prefects that the opposing candidates had little chance of an election. The peasants went to the polls saying: "Why disturb us to elect the deputies? The Government could elect them better itself."<sup>18</sup>

In regard to the working classes, the government made every effort to win them. The remodelling of Paris by Haussmann furnished work for the workingmen and was conducive to the popularity of the emperor. But workingmen's associations were strictly guarded by the police, and a law was passed which allowed the worker himself to keep the livret, his certificate of membership, in his own hands rather than in that of his employer. But even autocracy could not quench the democratic ideas which had seized the minds of the workers during the Revolution of 1848. The discontented began to agitate, and many who had believed in the Napoleonic democracy began to doubt its efficacy. At this time, "Paris, a prey to the fever of stock-jobbing and to corruption of manners through luxury, had come more or less to be like the Cæsarian Empire. The high functionaries with triple appointments lived in the midst of perpetual fêtes, and the prefect of the Seine, Haussmann, was starting to transform the Capital into a city of luxury, by which he forcibly removed a number of small shopkeepers and workingmen, when he tore down entirely the populous quarters."<sup>19</sup> This change of the narrow streets into broad boulevards made impossible a revival of the era of the barricades.

In spite of the prosecution of the police, secret societies continued to flourish. They became the centre of plots which were aimed at the life of the emperor, and in 1853, three attacks were made upon him. They were treated with great rigour. But this did not destroy the growth of the secret societies. Two societies, that of the South-East and the Mountain, continued to flourish and formed a great association under the name of the Marianne, which desired a republic. It was very strong among the working

<sup>18</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté," Vol. II, p. 258.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

classes who wished a radical change in society. They formed a centre around which the malcontents with the empire gathered and prepared the way for a more liberal régime.

In January 1858, Orsini made an attack upon the emperor which alarmed the government, and it used this opportunity to pass a law of general security which divided the country into five military departments under the rule of a marshal, that of Paris, Nancy, Lyons, Toulouse, and Tours. General Espinasse, who had been one of the ardent supporters of the coup d'état, was appointed Minister of the Interior. This law gave the government the right to impose imprisonment and fine without trial for any offence against public security and peace, or exciting hate, or disdain of the government. The law was applicable, first "to individuals condemned for divers crimes or political faults; second, to all individuals who had been condemned, either interned, or expelled or transported by occasion of the events of May and June, 1848, of June, 1849, or December, 1851," and their past acts came under the law. The ministers charged the prefects to arrest a certain number of persons using their choice as to the selection. From twenty to forty-one individuals were arrested in each department. The excess of the application of this law reacted upon the government. Jules Favres, the defender of Orsini, was elected to the Chamber, and Picard, the editor of the *Siècle*. These two with MM. Ollivier, Darimon, and Hénon, formed the famous group of the Five, who roused the public spirit and formed the nucleus of the growing Liberal party.

The forces of reaction had reached their zenith. Public opinion began to incline towards a more liberal government. The foreign policy of the government hastened this tendency. The war for the liberation of Italy in 1859 and the occupation of Rome by French troops alienated the clergy, who up to this time had been one of the main supports of the government. Napoleon, to counteract their influence, turned to the Liberal party. He began by passing an amnesty act which allowed the return of the exiles of 1851. This restored to the Republican party its leaders and they soon developed a considerable opposition. To conciliate the Liberal party, Napoleon allowed the Chamber to draw up a reply to the address from the throne, and to publish it in the *Moniteur*, the official organ, and to debate it in the Chamber. He also instituted a more liberal policy in the economic affairs of the country. Though the Chamber was strongly protectionist, he made a treaty with England which lowered the custom duties, and put France on the road to

free trade. In 1861, he gave the Chamber the right to vote upon articles of the budget separately. The severe restrictions upon the press were somewhat abated, and the Orleanist paper, *Journal des Débats*, and the Republican journals, *Siècle* and *Le Figaro*, began to be published. This was the beginning of the parliamentary régime. The immediate effect was a coalition of the opposition of the Republican and Orleanist parties. At the elections of 1863, the Liberal opposition returned to the Chamber 35 members, and to the government, 249 deputies. All the deputies from Paris belonged to the opposition.

Moreover the working classes had been growing in strength and they demanded a larger freedom of action. To conciliate them and win them over to the administration, the government granted the workmen the right of forming peaceful unions. The trades-union movement in Great Britain had stimulated the French workers and they began again to form a political force which had to be reckoned with. The new opposition in the Chamber began to criticise the policy of the government, its expedition to Mexico, its domestic policy, and the expenses and loans of the government.

A wave of liberal opinion swept over France, and books and pamphlets were issued which stimulated the public mind in the direction of liberalism. In 1860 there appeared "La France libérale en face de l'Europe"; in 1861, "La France et la Liberté"; "Napoleon III et la France libérale;" "La Liberté." In 1862, pamphlets entitled, *La presse libre selon les principes de 1789*; *Pétition pour la liberté des élections*; *A quand la Liberté*; *Le droit de parler*, by Eugene Pelletan; *La Liberté*, by Anatole de la Forge.<sup>20</sup>

It became more clear that France awaited "the crowning of the edifice, by the establishment of entire liberty" which Napoleon had promised in 1863. The debates in the Chamber took on a more animated and tempestuous character, during which Emile Ollivier said, "The Empire at the beginning had been an absolute government; to-day the Empire is a contradictory government; I demand that it becomes a constitutional and regular government."<sup>21</sup> This statement made a great sensation, and had a marked effect upon the ensuing elections. The opposition at Paris had nine candidates: Havin, Thiers, Emile Ollivier, Ernest Picard, Jules Favre, Gueroult, Darimon, Jules Simon, and Pelletan, and they were elected. Berryer, the legitimist, and

<sup>20</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté," Vol. II, p. 286.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

Marie, were elected at Marseilles; Jules Favre and Hénon at Lyons; Lanjuinais at Nantes. The government carried the country districts where the peasants predominated; but the cities, which were controlled by the bourgeoisie and the workers, returned members of the Opposition.

Thiers developed in the Chamber his theory of the five "necessary liberties." He said: "I am one of those who are called the representatives of the ancient parties; the country has given them the mission of discussing affairs with impartiality, not of introducing another form of government or another dynasty—There lies our duty; but it is the duty of the government to satisfy the wishes of the country. It is with respect that I demand it. It cannot be forgotten, however, that this fiery country, conscious of the fulness of its desire, if it is not allowed to-day to demand it in a respectful and deferential manner, one day, perhaps, will exact it."<sup>22</sup>

This discussion of the question of the coalition of the workers created a division in the ranks of the opposition, and Emile Ollivier and Darimon separated from their comrades. But Thiers continued to assail the government and gather around himself the old parliamentary group within and without the Chamber, and they formed a formidable opposition. In a partial election, this group was strengthened by the election of Carnot and Garnier Pagès, at Paris, the men of the Provisional Government of 1848. Concerning their election, the *Siècle* wrote that the election of these two democrats signified "Liberty, the amelioration of the workers, and solidarity of the people."

The ministry tried to stem the liberal tide by restricting public conferences and banquets, and it put on trial thirty of the most prominent liberals, for having held an association and meeting at which the legal number was limited to twenty. The trial ended in a fine, but made a great sensation because of the character of the defendants, among whom were Garnier Pagès, Carnot, Jules Ferry, and Léon Gambetta. The result of the trial was only to increase the influence of the opposition and to cast discredit upon the ministry.

De Morny, one of the leaders of the coup d'état of 1851, went over to the liberal forces and advocated a liberal empire. This had a marked influence upon Prince Napoleon, who, in January 1865, came out with a statement in which he advocated an extension of liberty, and foreshadowed a more liberal constitution. He feared the future and was being swept along in the

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

liberal movement of his time. The pure imperialists were alarmed and deprecated this appeal to revolutionary passions. The emperor addressed a letter to Prince Napoleon in which he rebuked him for his liberal utterances. "I cannot refrain from showing you the painful impression which the reading of your address given at Ajaccio causes me. The political programme which you have placed upon the shield of the Emperor (Napoleon I.) can only serve the enemies of my government. The Emperor had established first in his family, then in his government, that severe discipline which only allowed of one will and one action. I should not avoid henceforth the same rule of conduct."<sup>23</sup> Immediately he dismissed Prince Napoleon from his place as vice-president of the Council and president of the Universal Exposition of 1867.

But in spite of this opposition of the emperor to the expression of liberal ideas, the republicans gained adherents in the country. In the reply to the address in the Chamber in 1866, seventeen deputies moved an amendment to this effect: "France has a right to a free press. . . . She has a right to free elections. . . . She has a right to municipal liberty. Without liberty, no right is guaranteed. Liberty alone can give education to liberty: it belongs only to it to elevate the intelligence, to develop public virtue." This amendment was defeated but with a majority of only 17 votes.

While the emperor congratulated the Chamber of Deputies on rejecting this amendment, yet it was not without its effect. In a letter appearing in the *Moniteur* the end of January 1867, he gave expression to the following views: "I said, last year, that my Government wished to walk on firm ground capable of sustaining power and liberty. By the measures which I have indicated, my words are being realised; I will not disturb the ground which fifteen years of calm and prosperity have secured. I will consolidate it more in rendering my relations more intimate with the great public powers, in assuring through law to the citizens new guarantees, in finally achieving the crowning of the edifice raised by the national will."<sup>24</sup>

But the government was working in the direction of more liberal ideas. The force of events and the pressure of public opinion were exerting their influence upon the mind of the emperor. The workingmen were becoming infected with democratic ideas. The leaders of the Democratic party had attended

<sup>23</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté," Vol. II, p. 293.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.



the International Congress at Geneva in 1867 and had come home filled with a revolutionary fervour against the Empire. This found expression at a gathering which was organised to lay wreaths upon the graves of Manin and General Cavaignac. The police interfered and made some arrests, and their action was criticised severely by the opposition journals. The alarm of the government was increased by the discovery of secret societies working in alliance with the young republicans, and also a society of the Revolutionary Commune of the workers of Paris. There had been cries of "Vive la République!" heard in Paris and it was evident that the opposition to the empire was increasing.

In May 1868, Henry Rochefort issued his journal, the *Lanterne*, which from the first had an immense success by attacking the government and even the character of Napoleon. He was imprisoned and fined, and on his release, he went to Brussels to continue his publication. At the same time, there appeared a book by Eugène Tenot, "Paris en decembre 1851," which recalled the events of the coup d'état, and put before the French people the exiles and transportations of that period. The movement of public opinion in favour of the republicans was seen from a manifestation which took place at the cemetery of Montmartre, in November 1868, in honour of Representative Baudin, who had been killed at the barricades in 1851. Around his grave were heard the cries, "Vive la Liberté! Vive la République!" and a young man cried, "In the day of combat, the life of Baudin will serve us as an example and a stimulus." The editor of the *Reveil*, Delescluze, was prosecuted for having opened a subscription to raise a monument for Baudin. A young lawyer, Léon Gambetta, defended Delescluze. The trial created great excitement at the time. The eloquent words of Gambetta won the applause of the public and made the young lawyer famous from that day. Delescluze was condemned, but the words of Gambetta were read all over France and weakened the force of the government. He had said to the imperial lawyer, "Know this, I do not fear your contempt any more than your menaces. In ending your suit here yesterday, you said: 'We will see to it.' How, imperial lawyer, magistrate, man of the law, do you dare to say: 'We will take measures!' And what measures! are there not menaces there? Very well, listen, it is my last word: you can never either dishonour us, or beat us down."<sup>25</sup>

Gambetta also spoke of the "Men lost in debt and crime."

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

This speech had its effect upon public opinion and led to the resignation of the Minister of the Interior, Pinard. The latter result was seen in the elections, held in May 1869. While the government made every effort to sustain its official candidates, the Republican party increased its strength and elected 100 deputies opposed to the absolute government. Then appeared a crowd of new journals hostile to Napoleon and pamphlets and books which assailed without ceasing his government. Even the socialists took courage and proclaimed the "sovereignty of labour." Conflict broke out between the miners and the troops at Creuzot which was occupied by military forces. Socialists presented "candidates of the Revolution," such as Ledru-Rollin, Barbès, and Félix Pyat. A workingmen's party was formed and they began to speak of the "organisation of labour," the suppression of the permanent army and an army of the people, and advocated the example of Danton of "direct action."

At the opening of the session of the Chamber in 1869, Napoleon pronounced these significant words: "Aid me to save liberty; I shall answer for order." The address was coldly received and the Left responded with four interpellations, on the conduct of authorities in watching over the public tranquillity; maintenance of official candidates; the bloody repressions in the valley of the Loire and Aveyron; causes which had hindered the calling together of the legislative body. The Left even dared to say: "The author of the Constitution of 1852, in invoking the principles of '89, has submitted himself to the fundamental law of free societies. Now after having attached himself to constitutional power, he retains and seeks thus to elude the will of the country; he exercises it by the intermediary of a Senate which emanates from it, he modifies at his will the Constitution, he usurps the legislative power and remains master of our institutions. The national sovereignty is thus confiscated."<sup>26</sup>

Napoleon had now determined to introduce a liberal ministry and selected Emile Ollivier, the leader of the third party but still acting as his personal minister. In consequence, the third party divided, the old parliamentarians seceded and formed the Left-Centre, but the majority followed Ollivier and became the Right-Centre, and the pure imperialists who wished to retain the old autocracy became the extreme Right. Finally, a homogeneous ministry was formed by Ollivier on January 4, 1870, which represented the majority of the Chamber and was composed of four deputies from the Right-Centre, four from the

<sup>26</sup> Challamel. "Histoire de la Liberté," Vol. II, p. 310.

Left-Centre, and three from the previous ministry, and they entered upon the experiment of a liberal empire. The Left still continued in opposition, and though they had only forty votes, they represented the most active political life in France, among the large cities, the working classes and the students. They also stood for republican principles. A new party organised in 1869 was composed of the remnants of the old Republican party and openly advocated a republic. They stood for the ideas of 1793 and 1848 and desired a republic modelled after that of the United States and Switzerland. They became known as the Radical party. Their programme was that of the Belleville programme, prepared by Gambetta, and demanded, "the most radical application of universal suffrage."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STRUGGLE OF THE DEMOCRACY FOR THE REPUBLIC: THE COMMUNE: THE ROYALIST OPPOSITION

THE capitulation of the French army and the Emperor Napoleon at Sedan, September 2, 1870, was the signal at Paris for the overthrow of the empire and the declaration of the republic. The news of the surrender arrived on the 3d, and the party of the Left in the Corps Législatif moved to establish the republic. The deputies of the empire proposed a regency, but the Left opposed it. In the meantime, Paris was in a state of agitation and commotion and demanded that vigorous measures be taken for the prosecution of the war. If the empire was to be saved, there was no time to lose; but the deputies were uncertain what plan to pursue and adjourned the session until the following day. In the night, sentiment had been crystallising in favour of a republic. When the Corps Législatif met in the morning, the Left again demanded the republic. The republican forces of Paris had risen, and, before the Chamber of Deputies could come to any decision, they invaded the Chamber and insisted that the republic be proclaimed. A Government of National Defence was organised from the party of the Left with Jules Favre and Gambetta as leaders. The government refused to negotiate with the Corps Législatif and established itself at the Hôtel de Ville.

Republican sentiment had been created by the Liberal propaganda of the last six years and had strong support in Paris and in many parts of France. The empire had rested upon the army, and when the army was defeated, the republic was the inevitable outcome. While it owed its institution to the popular force in insurrection, yet it was the natural result of the traditions of 1789 and 1848. The movement for a republic was not confined to Paris. It was simultaneous with popular outbreaks in other large cities. In Lyons, Bordeaux, and Marseilles, the republic was proclaimed without waiting for the word from Paris.

The demand for a republic came from the industrial centres

and the departments of the East and South-East, which had been the strongholds of democracy in the First Revolution and had dominated France at that time. It was sustained by the working-men of the cities and the socialists, supported by a republican minority among the bourgeoisie. The republic was opposed by the royalists and conservative parties, the adherents of the empire, and the peasants of the country districts. Nevertheless the exigencies of the war and the patriotism of the country rallied all parties around the Government of National Defence and they accepted the leadership of Paris. As Paris was besieged, the government was divided into two sections: the first at Paris under Jules Favre, Jules Ferry, Arago, Picard, Garnier-Pagès, Jules Simon, and Pelletan, who formed the majority and controlled the conduct of the siege and the policy of the country; the other section of the government was only a delegation at Tour consisting of Crémieux, Glais-Bizoin, and Admiral Fourchon, and was strengthened in a few days by Gambetta, who had escaped from Paris in a balloon and who at once became the dominating spirit and united in himself the ministries of War and the Interior.

Hardly was the government installed at the Hôtel de Ville before it had to face questions of a serious nature affecting the internal peace of Paris and the attitude of the republic towards the Prussians. Order in the city was threatened by the International Association of workers under the leadership of the old socialist agitator, Blanqui, which, fearing reaction, began to arm itself. The Federal Chamber of Workers sent to the Government of National Defence a delegation demanding the suppression of all monarchical institutions, the municipal elections of the Department of the Seine, the abrogation of all repressive laws, the liberty of the press, and a levy "en masse." The government responded by calling out all young men between 25 and 30 years of age which led to an enrollment of 300,000 men in the National Guards. It also declared a general amnesty, the right of association, and the freedom of the press. It established a mayor of Paris, and decided on September 28th to hold the elections for a municipal council, instituted a provisional commission to replace the Council of State, and abrogated the High Court of Justice. In its outward relations, the question was whether Prussia would recognise the republic and agree to an armistice. The government sent Jules Favre as a delegate to Ferrières, September 19th, to negotiate with Bismarck. He demanded as a condition for an armistice the surrender of a

fort commanding Paris, and as a condition of peace the cession of territory and an indemnity. These conditions were unacceptable to Favre, who made at the time the famous reply: "Not an inch of our territory, not a stone of our fortresses."

And as the army of Marshal Bazaine was still intact at Metz, the government had hopes of a successful resistance. Bazaine, however, was not in favour of the republic and made a request of Bismarck that his army might be allowed to march on Paris and restore order and the empire. This was agreed to on the condition he establish the empress as regent and that the empress would call a convention to ratify the peace and cede the territory demanded by the Prussians. The empress, who was in England, consulted with her Council and refused to agree to any peace which involved the mutilation of France. This broke off all negotiations and Bismarck now turned to the Government of National Defence, and urged the election of a National Assembly which could conclude a peace. At first the government was in favour of this plan, but fearing that the electors would elect an Assembly in which the desire for peace at any price would prevail, it insisted, for the honour of France, that the war should continue and that France should fight against dismemberment. In the meantime, the Delegation of Tours had fixed a general election for October 16th, but this was annulled by the Government of Paris and Thiers was sent to negotiate a truce. Bismarck proposed the surrender of certain forts of Paris and an Assembly elected without an armistice. This was decided to be unacceptable by the government and it voted to continue the war.

Paris was now thoroughly invested by the Prussians and all communications were cut off from the country. Gambetta was organising a war à l'outrance and assuming dictatorial powers, levying both men and materials. In Paris the government was subjected to severe criticism by the radical element who claimed that the war was badly managed, and by the monarchists who attacked its dictatorial powers. Paris became the centre of a feverish agitation directed by the socialists and the clubs and an insurrection against the government seemed imminent. While the citizens on the ramparts displayed a patriotic spirit and obeyed the orders of General Trochu, the city was the prey of frequent disorders. Unfortunately a decree was passed instituting a commission of barricades which was presided over by Rochefort and other radical leaders. But far from realising the danger of this step, Jules Simon, a member of the

government, had said: "We will prepare a war for the Prussians of which they are ignorant, the war of the barricades."

Many demonstrations had been made against the government, and in October, Florens, at the head of ten battalions of the National Guard of Belleville, presented himself at the Hôtel de Ville demanding that the war be conducted more vigorously. In another section of the city, a movement was being agitated to establish a Commune; but both these demonstrations proved abortive. However, on the receipt of the news of the capitulation of Metz, October 31st, an insurrection broke out and the party of the Central Committee of the National Guards invaded the Hôtel de Ville, crying, "Vive la Commune!" The Communists accused the government of being in alliance with Thiers to sell out France. Its leaders were Blanqui, Delescluze, and Félix Pyat. The government was imprisoned for twelve hours and was released only by the arrival of a contingent of the National Guards from the party of order. The government now determined to strengthen its position by taking a plebiscite of the inhabitants of Paris and won the election by a vote of 357,000 to 32,000. Then it decided on vigorous measures to put down the socialists. Early in December, it dissolved the Worker's Association of Belleville because of the lack of discipline among its members in the National Guard and it removed the Committee of Delegates of the Guard and dissolved the 147th battalion of volunteers.

These acts appeared to the socialists and the revolutionaries as the beginning of reaction and they raised the cry of treason against the government. The effects of the siege, the want of food, and the severe cold of the winter were beginning to tell upon the morale of the people. The defence was badly conducted, and the sorties at Bourget and Champigny were unsuccessful and the National Guards and the people complained of the incompetency of General Trochu and demanded what they called a "torrential" attack on the Prussians by all the army. This was acceded to and the last sortie was made at Buzenval and proved a lamentable failure. After this, the end was in sight and under the stress of famine, Paris surrendered on January 21, 1871.

The next day there was an attempt at insurrection, but it was put down by the Republican Guards. Under the discouragement of the siege and the capitulation, numerous socialist journals began to appear; *le Reveil* by Delescluze and *le Combat* by Félix Pyat, and later *La Vengeur* and *Cri du peuple*. Among the

terms of the armistice was the election of a National Assembly, to ratify the peace. The elections were fixed for February 8th and the meeting of the Assembly at Bordeaux for February 12th. Gambetta, who had favoured the continuance of the war and who had tried to exclude from the polls all the officials who had run for office or had been connected with the government of the empire, was overruled by the government at Paris and the elections took place on February 8th.

The elections were held under the forms of 1848 with a general ticket for each department, and the number of deputies for the National Assembly was fixed at 768. From the attitude of Gambetta towards the war, the impression had been spread abroad that the Republican party was opposed to the peace. In consequence, the peasants voted with the monarchists and conservatives and the republicans obtained only 250 deputies, including the extreme Left. The Assembly was controlled by the reactionaries, the parties of the Right-Centre, the Legitimists, and the Left-Centre, the Orleanists. Thiers, who belonged to the Orleanist faction, and who had been elected in twenty-six departments by more than two millions of votes, was elected chief of the executive power. The Republican strength lay in the invaded departments and in the South-East and in Paris, which, however, had elected many revolutionaries. The Assembly, holding its session at Bordeaux, refused to declare the republic and formed a pact of Bordeaux, which put off the permanent organisation of the state until the peace was signed. The majority limited themselves merely to the election of the executive power with the right to choose the ministers. Thiers chose his ministers from the Left-Centre and the moderate republicans, and had no policy but that of making peace and restoring credit and reviving industry. The Assembly voted the preliminaries of peace which deprived France of two provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, and obliged her to pay five milliards of francs to the Prussians. It also established the seat of government at Versailles. This exasperated the Parisians, who felt that the majority of the Assembly was hostile to Paris and desired to suppress the republic. Ledru-Rollin, Girot-Pouzel, and Victor Hugo, deputies from Paris, retired from the Assembly together with five other deputies. The selection of Versailles as the seat of government was a bad choice, as it revived the memories of the monarchy. Moreover the Assembly passed two measures which further tended to rouse the feeling of Paris, already irritated by the removal of the seat of government and what it termed a shameful



peace. During the siege, the Government of National Defence had suspended the law of expirations; that is, the time of the payment of rents and notes. The Assembly refused to grant an extension of this law and this subjected many people to great hardships. During the negotiations of the peace, Jules Favre had insisted that the National Guard retain their arms and each guardsman received one franc and fifty centimes a day. This would tide him over the period of unemployment. The Assembly suppressed this payment and allowed it only to those who had certificates of indigence. These two measures placed nearly all Paris in opposition to the Assembly. The revolutionaries and socialists took advantage of this state of mind to organise a federation of the National Guards "to defend the interests of the National Guards" and "to resist any efforts to destroy the Republic" which seemed to be threatened by the monarchist majority. This step was made easier for the revolutionary party because, after the capitulation of Paris, 40,000 of the National Guard who belonged to the forces of order and lived in the western quarters of the city, had left Paris and gone into the country. It was in the eastern quarters, in the faubourg of Saint-Antoine, that the people responded to the call of the leaders. Besides, the entrance of the Prussian army into Paris on March 1st had served further to inflame the minds of the people and many of the National Guard were ready to oppose the entrance of the Prussian army by force of arms. It was only by the greatest efforts that the revolutionary leaders were able to restrain the soldiers during the occupation of three days by the Prussian army.

It was during this period that the National Guards seized the cannon belonging to the government and carried them to the heights of Montmartre to prevent them, as they said, from falling into the hands of the enemy.

The Versailles Government sent to the Central Committee of the National Guards to demand the guns, but it refused to deliver them. Then Thiers sent a detachment of troops to seize the guns, and, by an early morning surprise, they were able to seize most of them, but as they had brought no horses to draw the guns, they could not move them. By this time, the people were awake and the section was in commotion and the National Guards obstructed the passage of the troops. General Lecompte, who commanded the troops, ordered them to fire on the people, but they disobeyed and he was captured by the National Guards. Then the loyal troops retreated to the Place

de la Concorde and later from the city. Without the knowledge of the Central Committee, some of the soldiers determined to take vengeance upon the general and also upon General Thomas who had directed the firing on the people in the insurrection of June 1848. The mob overawed the jailers and seized the generals and shot them. This act led to serious consequences. The Central Committee was afraid to disavow the acts of the soldiers and there was a strong suspicion that many of them sympathised with the soldiers and approved their deed. The same day Thiers and the ministers were forced to withdraw from the city, and the Central Committee took possession of the Hôtel de Ville and established its government. From Versailles, Thiers made an appeal to the loyalty of the National Guards, pointing out the illegal character of the committee, the lawless conduct of the soldiers in shooting the generals, and the danger to order and peace from its control. "Who are the members of this Committee? No one in Paris knows them. . . . Whoever they may be, they are the enemies who will deliver Paris to pillage, France to the Prussians, the Republic to despotism. Because of the abominable crimes which they have committed it eliminates any excuse for those who would dare either to follow or submit to them. Do you wish to take the responsibility of their assassinations or of the ruins which are amassing? If not, remain in your homes. But if you value your honour and your highest interests, rally to the Government of the Republic and to the National Assembly." <sup>1</sup>

This proclamation produced little impression on the general mass of the people, but it was remarked that the students of the Polytechnic School went to the mairie of the Second Arrondissement where the mayors were gathered together in consultation and united with the forces of order. In the previous revolutions the students had always been in sympathy with the people; but this time the insurrection had been organised by the proletariat and the small tradesmen.

The Central Committee at once placarded a reply to that of Thiers in which it claimed to have organised a government for the defence of Paris and the rights of the people; it referred to the government of Versailles as "the shameless fools who want to attack the Republic. Let Paris and France together lay the foundation of a true Republic, the only Government which will forever close the era of revolution." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Challamel, Vol. II, p. 353.

<sup>2</sup> Lissagaray, "History of the Commune," p. 92.

In the meantime, Paris was a prey to fears of disorder and riots, and the Central Committee, in order to allay its fears, enjoined the National Guards to patrol the streets. This at once raised a question of authority, and the mayors and the deputies of the city determined to send commissioners to the Hôtel de Ville to try to adjust the differences. Clemenceau expressed their opinion when he said, "The insurrection has been undertaken upon an illegitimate motive; the cannon belong to the State. The Central Committee is without a mandate and in no wise holds Paris. Numerous battalions are gathering around the deputies and mayors. Soon the Committee will become ridiculous and its decrees will be despised. Besides, Paris has no right to revolt against France, and must absolutely acknowledge the authority of the Assembly. The Committee has but one other way of getting out of the difficulty—to submit to the union of deputies and mayors, who are resolved to obtain from the Assembly the satisfaction claimed by Paris." The Central Committee dissented from this statement and claimed that they had an imperative mandate from the people forbidding the Assembly or the government to touch their liberties or the republic. The grounds of the complaints of the Committee were well expressed by one of its members: "The Assembly has never ceased to question the existence of the Republic. It has placed a dishonoured General at our head, decapitalised Paris, tried to ruin her commerce. It has sneered at our sufferings, denied the devotion, the courage, the abnegation Paris has shown during the siege, hooted her best-loved representatives, Garibaldi and Victor Hugo. The plot against the Republic is evident. The attempt was commenced by gagging the press; they hoped to terminate it by the disarmament of our battalions."<sup>3</sup>

But behind these complaints, he had revealed the desire for the Commune which drew forth from one of the socialist deputies, Millièrè, this remark: "Have a care, if you unfurl this flag, you will launch all France upon Paris, and I foresee days as fatal as those of July. The hour of social revolution has not yet struck. Progress is obtained by slower methods." Asked by Clemenceau what they wanted, the Committee replied, "We want not only the election of the municipal council, but real municipal liberties, the suppression of the préfecture of the police, the right of the National Guard to name its chiefs and to reorganise itself, the proclamation of the Republic as the legal Government, the pure and simple remittance of the rents

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 96.

due, and equitable law on over due bills, and the Parisian territory interdicted to the army."<sup>4</sup>

The result of this debate was that the Central Committee agreed to send four representatives to the Second Arrondissement where the deputies and mayors were gathered, forming a group of sixty members. The meeting was not harmonious and disagreements arose on the question of authority. Recriminations followed and the Committee ended by saying, "You are now face to face with force. Beware of letting loose a civil war by your resistance." To which the liberals replied, "It is you who want civil war." An agreement seemed impossible, and Louis Blanc expressed the feelings of the deputies when he said, "You are insurgents against a freely elected Assembly. We, the regular mandatories, cannot avow a transaction with insurgents. We shall be willing to prevent civil war, but not to appear as your auxiliaries in the eyes of France."

It was this insurgency which constituted the weakness in the position of the Committee and prevented the adjustment of the just complaints which Paris had against the actions and attitude of the monarchic Assembly. The Central Committee adhered to its original plan and held the power at the Hôtel de Ville. It ordered the elections to take place on March 22d. On the other hand the radical deputies returned to the Assembly at Versailles and proposed a bill convoking the elections at Paris and another granting to the National Guard the right to elect their chiefs. The Assembly refused to have any dealings with the insurrection of March 18th and urged the government to extreme measures of repression. As the Central Committee would not yield, but continued to exercise the functions of government at Paris, civil war was inevitable. The Committee commenced to prepare for war and sent out troops to seize all the forts around Paris. As the government at Versailles had withdrawn all the officials and disorganised the government of Paris, the Committee was forced to improvise a government and it made a requisition on the Bank of France for funds which the governor honoured as he held that the Bank had no politics. This enabled the Committee to meet the pressing needs of the new government and helped to allay the disturbances in the city.

On the 28th of March the situation was this: The Central Committee adhered to its policy of holding the elections on the 22d, while the Assembly had voted urgency in holding the elections, but failed to designate the time. It had also voted to

<sup>4</sup>Lissagray, "History of the Commune," p. 97.

extend the time of overdue bills for three months, but refused the demand of the National Guards to elect their officers. Then the deputies and mayors issued an address against the legality of the elections on the morrow and thirty-five journals made the same protest, saying, "Considering that the convocation of electors is an act of national sovereignty; the exercise of this sovereignty belongs only to the powers issued from universal suffrage; in consequence the Committee which is installed at the Hôtel de Ville has neither the right nor the knowledge to make this convocation; the representatives of the undersigned journals consider the convention placarded for the 22d of March null and void, and pledge the electors not to take any account of it."<sup>5</sup>

The Central Committee, who had guaranteed the freedom of the press, now revoked it and threatened the press with severe repression, if the editors continued to attack the government of Paris.

At the same time, the insurrection began to manifest its socialistic character and some of the members of the Committee published an article in the *Journal Officiel* in which they said, "The proletarians of the capital, amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs. . . . Does the bourgeoisie, which has accomplished its emancipation, not understand that the time for the emancipation of the proletariat has now come? Why, then, does it persist in refusing the proletariat its legitimate share?"

On the one hand, this served to alarm the forces of order and roused the resentment of the conservative parties at Versailles; on the other, it rallied to the Central Committee all the socialists and communists of Paris. It had the further effect of weakening the efforts of the deputies of the Left before the National Assembly. In spite of this, the deputies and the mayors still pressed the plans of conciliation, and at the meeting of the Assembly on the 23d, M. Arnaud read a declaration which pointed out the indispensable necessity of passing certain measures to avoid civil war. These measures were passed without opposition and Thiers gave them his tacit consent; and the news was announced on the 24th that peace was concluded between Versailles and Paris. But at the last moment, the terms were overthrown by the extremists at Versailles who desired no settlement, and by the violent men on the Committee at Paris who

<sup>5</sup> Simon, "Le Gouvernement de M. Thiers," Vol. I, p. 277.

were planning a communist régime. The elections which had been postponed to March 26th, finally took place and were a severe disappointment to both the forces of order and to the Central Committee. Out of 481,970 names inscribed on the voting lists, only 224,197 electors, or 46 per cent of the total, voted; 86,731 votes had been given to the sixteen councillors opposed to the Commune and after the election they resigned. It was clear that the party of order had abstained from voting, and had they gone to the polls, peace might have been made and Paris would have been saved from the Commune.

Defenders of the Commune have claimed that it was the result of an appeal to the people and they have pointed to the 224,197 electors who voted. But they have overlooked the fact that the elections took place under intimidation and the voting was open rather than secret. The Central Committee had only 30 of their number, out of 80, elected. And after the withdrawal of the 16 councillors of the party of the mayors, there remained only 64 delegates of the new government of the Commune. Among these were 17 members of the International, and most of the others were members of the socialist and revolutionary parties. It was a group of wild theorists without unity of purpose, with divergent aims and conflicting plans as to the nature of government. Delescluze and Félix Pyat were elected, together with many of the disciples of Blanqui. The new Commune debarred from the elections the deputies of the National Assembly, and the deputies who had been elected to the Council at once withdrew because of its cosmopolitan character, and the governmental chaos which reigned at the Hôtel de Ville.

The Central Committee, instead of resigning its powers into the hands of the new government, retained its power as the Committee of the National Guard. At once the new government became the scene of indescribable confusion, and a struggle between rival parties and interests. These rivalries led to a change of the governing committee six times in six weeks to the complete disorganisation of the government. The Commune had been elected as a municipal government for Paris; but no sooner was it installed at the Hôtel de Ville than it began to claim legislative and constituent powers. At first the Commune concerned itself with the needs of the workers and the small shop-keepers, but it soon arrogated to itself the powers of the National Government. It decreed the separation of Church and State; confiscated wealth in mortmain; abolished conscription, and created the National Guard as the sole army; enrolled

all able-bodied citizens in the Guard, and all citizens below the age of forty, in the regiments of the line. It invited all residents of Paris to return to their homes within twenty-four hours under penalty of losing their titles to incomes; and it forbade all employees to obey the orders of the Versailles Government. It appointed ministers for the different departments of the government, but as there was no unity in the administration, it resulted in confusion of orders among the subordinates through the rivalries of the different ministers.

Before the organisation of the army was completed, public opinion had forced the Commune to order an advance upon Versailles. It had hoped to repeat the days of October 5th and 6th, 1789. Instead of this, the army was defeated and lost many prisoners, and their general, Duval, was killed. An attack also upon Fort Mont-Valérien was repulsed and the army of the Commune was reduced to the defensive. Now the government of Versailles collected a national army from the prisoners who had returned from Germany and placed it under the command of Marshal MacMahon and he soon besieged Paris. The government of the Commune was looked upon in France and abroad as a band of political adventurers and was denied belligerent rights. Hence, the Versailles Government shot its prisoners as common criminals. The Commune retaliated by seizing eighty-six prominent citizens among whom was the Archbishop of Paris, and held them as hostages doomed to be shot "by way of reprisal." The siege continued for seven weeks and gradually the army of MacMahon drew the lines tighter around the city. Apart from the incapacity of the generals of the communist army, it was inevitable that the army would succumb to the steady pressure of the national troops. By the 22d of May, the end was not far off, and the Commune held its last session. The Central Committee established at the Hôtel de Ville tried to bring order out of the confusion through the National Guard, but without effect. The army of Marshal MacMahon entered Paris on the 24th and advanced as far as the Trocadero. The army of the Commune was in full flight from the western part of the city and officers who tried to stop the retreat were met with the reply, "It is now a war of barricades; every one to his quarter." It was the proclamation of Delescluze which led to the demoralisation of the army. He had said: "Enough of militarism. No more staff-officers with their gold-embroidered uniform. Make way for the people, for the combatants with naked arms. The hour of the revolutionary war has struck.

The people know nothing of learned manœuvres. But when they have a gun in their hands, pavements under their feet, they do not fear all the strategists of the mechanical school.”<sup>6</sup>

In the disorder that reigned the worst scoundrels came to the front and the Tuileries and other public buildings were set on fire, having been first soaked with petroleum. The palace of the kings was consumed and the Palais Royal and some other buildings in the vicinity were saved only by the timely arrival of the national troops.

The struggle continued until the 28th, when the Versailles army captured the last barricade. The army, incensed by the bitter resistance and the burning of the public buildings, not only shot its prisoners, but shot them down in masses. For these massacres there can be no extenuation. Undoubtedly the Commune had shot its hostages during the last days of the conflict, but this was without orders from the Central Committee. In the excitement of the last days of the fighting, when the communards refused all obedience to their officers and the Committee had lost all control over the soldiers, violent men followed their own impulses, and, in the spirit of revenge, went to the jails and shot the hostages. It was these deeds which exasperated the army and some of the officers ordered masses of men to be shot without a trial. It is possible, also, as has been suggested, that the national army, composed of generals and troops who had ignominiously surrendered at Sedan and Metz, were ready to wrack their revenge upon the people of Paris who had overthrown the empire and established a republic at the time that they were fighting for their country. Moreover, the army was led by men who were in sympathy with the reactionary majority of the Assembly who desired to stamp out and destroy not only the socialists, but also the republicans. The best explanation of this whole tragic affair is that given by Jules Simon: “It is regrettable that cruelties have been committed by the conquerors. They can explain them; but it is impossible to think of justifying them. The Government had given the formal order to make prisoners of those who surrendered their arms. That was also the will of the Marshal and the principal officers of the army. Nothing in the world is more difficult than to overexcite the ardour of the soldier, when he is on this side of the wall and to keep him master of himself as soon as he is on the other side.

“He has been killed and he kills. Victory during the first

<sup>6</sup> Lissagaray, “History of the Commune,” p. 314.



hour is only a vengeance. The men who see their blood shed, while marching over the bodies of their comrades, do not show any mercy. They are sometimes ferocious, and that is profoundly deplorable. . . . The regiments which returned from captivity, which had need of rest and a good reception by the country, had seen themselves obliged to take the harness again, to give and receive cannon-shots and rifle-shots, during which they were awaited by their families. The conflagrations of Paris were not deeds to soften the conquerors. The flames which enveloped the public buildings showed to these intrepid men the rage and fury of men under a new form. In seeing this barbarity they forgot that they were in France."<sup>7</sup>

But it was not alone during the fighting, but after it was all over, that the spirit of vengeance was manifested. At the end of June 1872, when the official returns of the repression were made, we find that there were "36,309 prisoners, men, women, and children, without counting the 5,000 military prisoners, and 1,179 of these had died in prison; 22,326 had been liberated after long winter months in the pontoons, the forest, and prisons; 10,488 brought before the court-martial which condemned 8,525 of them." On the report of January 1, 1875, the general résumé gave 10,137 condemnations pronounced in the presence of the accused, and 3,313 in default. Of these 13,440 persons, 157 were women and children. About 7,500 were deported to the desert colony of New Caledonia. The tale of the sufferings of these thousands is heart-rending and leaves a stigma upon the government of the time.

The vindictiveness of the monarchist majority of the Assembly and their hope of bringing back the monarchy by the severity of their repressions was destined to defeat itself. While Paris had lost by voluntary and compelled exile, by imprisonment and death, 100,000 men, as the lists of the next election showed, it had not lost its republican character. The reaction against the atrocities and repressions led to a republican victory. No one can defend the atrocities, the massacres, the burnings of the communards, but this was the work of a small minority. Paris was neither socialistic nor communistic at the time of the insurrection. Many who even joined the Commune, and they were a minority in Paris, did so in the belief that they would save the republic which was threatened by the reactionary majority of the Assembly of Versailles. Many of the National Guard took their stand because of the refusal of the Assembly

<sup>7</sup> Simon, "Le Gouvernement de M. Thiers," p. 473.

to allow them to elect their own officers and in the belief that they were fighting for the republic. It was the bitterness of the monarchists in the Assembly which tied the hands of Thiers when, through the mediation of the mayors and deputies of Paris, they might have secured peace. The cowardice of the majority of the electors of Paris who refused to go to the polls threw the power into the hands of the minority and gave the wild theorists their opportunity to establish the Commune. It was for this opportunity that the socialists of all shades of opinion, and the internationalists had been watching and waiting. The communist manifesto of Karl Marx of 1847 had been their programme, and with the establishment of the republic on September 4, 1870, all the socialists of 1848 reappeared and the old leaders, Blanqui, Félix Pyat, and their disciples, renewed their activity and under the stress of the war and the horrors of the siege, and the mistakes of the Committee of Defence, they found the soil prepared and the minds of the masses receptive to their ideas. When the conflict between the National Guard and the Assembly developed over the political questions of decapitalising Paris and electing its municipal council, the people were roused in opposition and this furnished the socialists their opportunity, and they directed the political discontents in the way of social revolution. There is repeated here the same process as was followed in the Revolution of 1789. With different methods and a different purpose, the insurrection slowly lost its political character and passed over and on to social revolution.

After the defeat of the Commune in May 1871, the faction opposed to the republic, there still remained the more formidable opposition of the royalist factions. At this period, the republic was only provisionally established in accordance with the pact of Bordeaux. The form of government might be changed at the will of the Assembly which claimed constituent powers. Under this pact, the republic was not established and consolidated until 1875 when the Assembly passed the constitutional law.

During these four years, the monarchical majority, composed of the Right-Centre and the Orleanist Left-Centre of the Assembly, nearly succeeded in restoring the monarchy. It was only the rivalries of the Legitimist and Orleanist factions which prevented this event. For the first two years they supported the ministry of Thiers who governed in the name of the republic and devoted his energies to restoring the regions devastated by the war and freeing the territory from the foreign invader. The basis of his support in the Assembly lay in the Left-Centre, and

he took his ministers from that party with the addition of three members from the moderate republicans. To strengthen his position with the republicans, M. Grévy was elected president of the Chamber of Deputies.

The complementary elections of July 1871 went in favour of the republicans and this alarmed the monarchical factions. Nevertheless they continued to support Thiers, as his administration was necessary for the adjustment of post-war conditions. The Assembly passed many measures with this end in view, including the negotiation of the loans of 1871 and 1872; and the payment of the indemnity to free the territory from Prussian troops. It also passed laws for the recall of the Orlean princes and for the establishment of departmental councils and gave to the smaller communes the right of electing their mayors and municipal councils; but the Assembly refused self-government to the large communes and kept them in a state of siege for fear of their republican majorities.

In August 1871, the Assembly voted to give the executive power the title of President of the French Republic as a mark of esteem for Thiers and as an appreciation of his eminent services during the last six months. The vote of confidence, however, implied no departure from the pact of Bordeaux, but was only the continuance of the tentative form of republican government.

This system did not meet with favour among two parties in the Assembly; the legitimate royalists who desired a restoration of the king, attacked the government, and criticised its tendencies towards republican forms; and the extreme republicans who protested against the provisional character of the republic and resented the control of the government by the Orleanist party. Gambetta was the leader of this republican group and he made a tour of the country to educate the people in republican principles. Such was the state of the parties when Thiers made his famous speech on the "Conservative Republic" which alienated him from the monarchical factions. On November 1871, he said: "The Republic exists; it is the legal Government of the country; to desire otherwise would be a new revolution and the most to be feared of all. Let us not waste our time in denouncing it; but let us employ our time in imprinting upon it the characteristics that are desirable and necessary. . . . The Republic will be conservative, or it will not exist. . . . France has no mind to live in continual alarms; she desires to be able to live in peace, so that she may work to maintain herself, and to meet her enormous burdens; and if she is not given the calm which

she absolutely needs, whatever be the Government that may refuse her this calm, she will not endure it long! Let no one delude himself! It may be imagined that, thanks to universal suffrage, and so backed by the power of the mass, a Republic could be established that would be the creature of a single party! That would be a work to endure only for a day.

"But the mass itself needs repose, security, work. It may live for a few days on agitation, but not for long. After inspiring fear in others, it takes fright itself, it flings itself into the arms of an adventurer, and pays with twenty years of slavery for a few days of a disastrous licence.

"The Revolution of 1789 was made to abolish classes, that there should be in the nation only the nation itself, the nation united, living all together under one and the same law, carrying the same burdens, enjoying the same advantages, in which, in a word, every man should be rewarded or punished according to his works.

"Acting in this way, the Republic of 1789 established the existence of all upon the basis of true social justice; and its principles swept over the whole world, because they were nothing else than social justice proclaimed and applied—for the first time in the world's history. And it is because it had this signification that it was possible to boast of the tricoloured flag that it would go the whole world round. Long, in the wake of a conqueror, it moved in victory among the nations of Europe; but its material works have perished, while its spiritual achievements remain and are the most solid glory of France, far more than victories that by the chance of mere force pass from one flag to another."<sup>8</sup>

His message traced the outlines of a conservative republic and aroused the ire of the monarchists and the rage of the Bonapartists by his veiled allusion to a "master adventurer" in Napoleon III. They called Thiers "an ambitious old man" and accused him of breaking the neutrality of the pact of Bordeaux. Thiers, however, was conservative in his policy, and to strengthen his position he changed some of his ministers in the direction of the Right-Centre party. The monarchists had tolerated Thiers, as he was necessary for the post-war adjustments and they hoped that he would prove a stepping-stone to the establishment of royalty. When they discovered that he was intractable and opposed to their schemes, they determined on his overthrow. With this end in view, they appointed a Commission of Thirty

<sup>8</sup> *Mémoires of M. Thiers*, pp. 286-8.

to draw up a Constitution; but instead of doing this, the Commission confined itself to limiting the powers of the president. He was no longer allowed to speak in the Assembly unless he had first announced his visit, and immediately after took his departure. No response could be made to his address until the next day. By this means it was hoped to destroy his influence over the Assembly and to prevent him, by his eloquence, winning over some of the deputies to his views. The growing dissension between the president and the Assembly broke out into an open conflict when the Assembly elected as its president, Buffet, a member of the Right, instead of M. Grévy, the moderate republican. Gambetta became alarmed and he accused the Commission of seeking to introduce the monarchy.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you who have repelled the proposition of proceeding immediately to this new creation of an upper Chamber, comprehend that the trust of national sovereignty, which you have received in 1871, was indivisible, and that in this country, as it is constituted, as the successive revolutions have made it, as its manners and its temperament have made it to-day, it is absolutely chimerical to seek to form a Chamber. . . . When they come to demand from us, Republicans, the sacred trust of universal suffrage, we shall say, no."<sup>9</sup>

But this protest was without avail. The monarchists paid no attention to Gambetta and pursued their course of attacking the government. Early in March, Thiers defended his policy and justified his attitude towards the republic. "As I demanded," he said, "under the Empire, necessary liberty, I demand to-day necessary institutions. . . . But we have here two great parties, subdivided among themselves in many groups. If the Government acts, they cry absolutism. If the Government is tolerant of all parties, they say that it seeks to find refuge behind equivocation. . . . I am the sincere and loyal President of what? The Republic; and I shall not violate this trust. No one has demanded a proclamation from you. They have only demanded some institutions, several necessary laws, with the continuation of the pact of Bordeaux. Behold the only politics which I understand."<sup>10</sup>

The government had brought forward a bill advocating the organisation of the state with two Chambers and a president, but public opinion was opposed to any action by the Assembly and petitions poured in to the Chamber urging its dissolution

<sup>9</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté en France," Vol. II, p. 394.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 394.

and a new appeal to the country. The party lines became more strictly drawn and the ulterior aims of the monarchists became more manifest. The royalist journals continued their attacks upon the president, and during the prorogation of the Assembly from April 8th to May 19th, the Legitimists, Orleanists, and Bonapartists formed a coalition against the president and the Conservative Republic.

The fusion of these parties led to an understanding between the Comte de Chambord and the Comte de Paris, the Legitimist and Orleanist heirs to the throne, and the coalition under the leadership of De Broglie attacked the ministry of Thiers.

The effect of the coalition was to increase the growth of the republican spirit in the country, and the complementary elections of April and May were a victory for the Radical party. The monarchical coalition, fearing the control of the Chamber of Deputies would pass to the republicans, determined to act. The difficulty was to find a man upon whom all factions could unite and who would be subservient to its plans. Each party of the coalition desired to organise the state so as to promote the interests of its own candidate for the throne.

They finally united upon Marshal MacMahon to replace Thiers as president. Then they opened the attack upon Thiers charging him with not forming a homogeneous ministry, but they were afraid to bring forward the real ground of their complaint; namely, his policy of consolidating the republic. After a bitter debate and a splendid defence by Thiers of his policy, the vote of censure was passed on May 24, 1873, and Thiers resigned. The same day, in the evening, the Assembly elected Marshal MacMahon president, who formed a ministry under De Broglie, representing the empire with his colleagues taken from the Right. This ministry formed the "Fighting Government" whose purpose was to destroy the republic.

While the De Broglie ministry undertook not to attack republican institutions, yet it proceeded to change the officials of the administration and to remove the prefects and sub-prefects who were known for their republican sympathies. It also continued the policy of holding the large cities in a "state of siege" and exercised a strict supervision of the press. Wherever possible, it put down all republican agitation; prohibited the sale of its journals in the streets, and imposed a censorship on the theatres. In June 1873, it suspended the publication of the journal, *Le Corsaire*, and the Minister of the Interior sent the following letter to the prefects of the departments; "Send me immediately

a report on the press of your department. The hour has come to assert the authority and influence which an affectation of indifferent neutrality has destroyed. Let me know the conservative journals or those susceptible of becoming so, what are the shades of opinion to which they belong; their financial situation and the price for which they could be attached to the Administration; the name of the editors-in-chief, their presumed opinions and their antecedents. If you can talk with them, see if they will accept a correspondence and in what sense they desire it."<sup>11</sup>

This confidential circular was unearthed by Gambetta and he laid it before the Assembly. It was evident that the ministry was trying to buy the press with public money. Convicted of this flagrant fault, Pascal, the Minister of the Interior, resigned. The government was compromised, and Marshal MacMahon, to save the situation, prorogued the Assembly on July 30th and appointed the next session for November 5, 1873.

During the vacation the coalition developed its plans to restore the monarchy and everything seemed to be arranged for the coming of the Comte de Chambord, Henry V, to Versailles, when a disagreement arose over the adoption of the tricolour flag. The Comte de Chambord wrote a letter in which he affirmed his previous declarations and said he would not deny the standard of Arques and Ivry and disavowed the acts and conditions of the coalition. This split the monarchical party in two and it became clear that no restoration was possible.

The Orleanist party now formed a project of its own and the government continued its policy of repression and prosecuted the republican press and suspended the municipal councils of Lyons and Saint Quentin. Then the Bonapartists brought forward their plan and demanded an appeal to the people by universal suffrage. Roucher, their leader, protested against the attempts at monarchical restoration, and hoped by an appeal to the people, to establish the empire under the son of Napoleon. The Bonapartists formed a strong party in opposition to the monarchical group. At the opening of the session in November, De Broglie and the Orleanists desired to obtain a dictatorship for Marshal MacMahon for ten years, but Roucher opposed this, though he was agreeable to an appointment for seven years, hoping in the meantime that the influence of the ex-Prince Imperial would have so increased that at the expiration of Marshal Mac-

<sup>11</sup> Challamel, "Histoire de la Liberté en France," Vol. II, p. 398.

Mahon's term of office, the Bonapartists could appeal to the country by a plebiscite.

In January 1874, the De Broglie ministry passed a bill giving the executive power to appoint all the mayors in the communes and later it brought forward a project of a second Chamber in which it hoped to secure a majority of the Orleanist faction. The government also proposed a new electoral law, restricting the suffrage, replacing the scrutin uninominal by the scrutin-de-Liste and requiring twenty-five years as the age for voting.

The Bonapartists were not behind the Orleanists in their schemes. They carried on an agitation in all the departments and flooded them with pamphlets and pictures of Napoleon IV. On March 16th, they held a great gathering at Chislehurst when the Prince Imperial attained his majority. Realising the danger of this step, the republicans united their forces and Thiers entered into an alliance with Gambetta, and they declared that "a dissolution was a necessary act." The monarchists were alarmed in their turn, and now proposed a measure to punish all acts and manœuvres tending to change the form of government. An understanding was agreed to by the Legitimists, Bonapartists, and the republicans to defeat the projects of De Broglie whom they suspected of plotting an Orleanist domination with Comte d'Aumale as president. This resulted in the defeat of the ministry on the electoral law by 381 votes to 317, and De Broglie resigned.

Marshal MacMahon now chose a ministry agreeable to the Bonapartist party under De Fourtou, May 23, 1874. This ministry continued the policy of its predecessor, prosecuting the republican journals, suspending municipal councils, and limiting the suffrage by extending the time of domicile.

These measures provoked a violent struggle with the republicans. In June, Gambetta attacked the imperial régime as consisting of high personages, "the wretches who have ruined France." The president demanded that he recall his words; far from doing so, Gambetta answered, "My expression was calculated not to give offence but to inflict a brand; and I maintain it." This incident caused great disorder in the House and Gambetta was called to order and his words inscribed in the procès-verbal. This attack exasperated the Bonapartists, and some of the more ardent of the party waited for an opportunity to revenge the insult. "On June 10th, on the arrival of the train from Versailles at the Gare Saint-Lazare, Gambetta was struck by a Bonapartist, the republican deputies insulted, and on the



morrow the journal *Le Pays* called them 'the elected of the radicals, those sinister men, sons of the rioters of June, the incendiaries of the municipal guards, the grandsons of the executioners of '93.' " <sup>12</sup>

These attacks did not serve to allay the feelings of resentment in the Chamber of Deputies. On the contrary, they increased the irritation and widened the breach between the Assembly and the government. The ministry resigned and President Mac-Mahon formed a ministry of Bonapartists, his personal followers. This ministry of General Cissey aimed to confer upon the president new powers and to make him independent of the Chamber of Deputies. During their period the Paris elections were held and they were in favour of the republicans. It was becoming clear that none of the parties opposed to the republic could obtain a majority in the Assembly. The republican strength had been steadily growing both in the country and in the Assembly. In the by-elections between May 1873 and January 1875, the republicans won 23 seats and the Bonapartists only six seats.

There was a growing conviction that the struggle was narrowing down to a contest between the Bonapartists and republicans and that there was no hope of monarchical restoration. As the demand to constitute a permanent government was becoming imperative, the monarchical groups began to form an alliance with the Left in its plan to constitute the republic. In January 1875, it was decided to consider the constitutional laws. Laboulaye, of the Left-Centre, proposed a government with a president and two Chambers. There was a difference of opinion over the manner of electing the president. The republicans desired to elect him by universal suffrage. Then Wallon, of the Right-Centre, proposed an amendment; namely, that the president of the republic be elected by "the Senate and Chamber of Deputies united in the National Assembly." He urged his party to support this amendment on the ground that "the monarchy is impossible. No one will longer propose it. The Republic will be made without you, if you do not make it yourselves."

The decision, however, depended upon the attitude of the radical republicans and Gambetta had hard work to hold them in line for the amendment. It was only by his genius and oratory that he won enough votes to establish the republic and even then the amendment was only carried by one vote. A special meeting of the Republican Union had been called to consider the

<sup>12</sup> Neucastel, "Life of Gambetta," p. 182.

question, and to determine the policy of the party, and emotions and feelings were intense as it was felt that the republic was at stake, and the opportunity to establish it would be thrown away, if the extreme republicans held to their position. It was said that it was Gambetta who carried the vote by an address which touched even his opponents. "They related that at his last words, 'the emotion of his hearers was extreme, an emotion which even pervaded the delegates of the Left-Centre and the group of Lavergne, who assisted at the session. No greater spectacle, indeed, than that of the ardent convinced Republicans, abandoning the traditions of their party to accomplish a duty, to save the Republic. The agreement was made. The majority was certain. They decided, however, to avoid any snares, as the majority remained compact and united, by refusing all amendments which should be presented in the course of the discussion, and to vote alone for the project of Wallon as had been adopted by the coalesced groups.'"<sup>13</sup>

The constitutional laws were passed on February 25, 1875. The Constitution avoided the defects of the Constitution of 1848 which allowed the election of the president by universal suffrage and made him a co-ordinate power with the Assembly. The president was now elected by the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, and was eligible for re-election. While the president could appoint the ministers, they were responsible to the Chamber of Deputies and dependent upon its majority; but the Chamber could be dissolved by the president with the consent of the Senate. On the constitution of the Senate there was an animated debate. The republicans desired to elect the senators by universal suffrage, but the Assembly would not agree to this. It was finally decided to form a Senate of three hundred members, seventy-five to be elected for life and the remainder to be elected for nine years, one-third to be renewed every three years. The senators were to be elected by a special electoral body in the departments composed of the deputies of the departments, general councillors of the municipalities, and other special classes. The two Chambers had the same powers, but the initiative in finance belonged to the Chamber of Deputies. To revise the Constitution, it was necessary for the Chambers to vote separately, declaring that there was need of revision. The Constitution was a compromise between two opposing principles, the monarchical and the democratic. The president occupied the position of a constitutional king and the Senate retained a position above

<sup>13</sup> Neucastel, "Life of Gambetta," p. 185.

the reach of the democracy. The Chamber of Deputies was elected by universal suffrage and represented the people.

This Constitution was passed by the Assembly which was elected during the war of 1870 and which had claimed constituent powers. The Constitution was never submitted to the people and represented the controlling interests at the time. But it only served to arrest the democratic movement for a few years. Within ten years, the republicans had attained such a hold upon the country and upon the Senate that they were able to modify the methods of electing senators so as to make them dependent upon the suffrages of the people. Under the leadership of Gambetta the republic continued to advance until it obtained such solidity and permanence that no royalist reaction could shake its foundations.



## BOOK III

DEMOCRACY IN ENGLAND



## CHAPTER I

### BEGINNINGS OF DEMOCRACY: RISE OF THE RADICAL PARTY: INFLUENCE OF THE AMERICAN CONFLICT

THE year 1769 marks the awakening of England from its political apathy and the formation of a small but aggressive radical party. The leader of this movement was John Wilkes, elected member for Aylesbury in 1757, who published the *North Briton* in 1763. This paper by its violence and unscrupulous defence of the Opposition in Parliament and by its attacks upon the ministry of Lord Bute, brought Wilkes into public notice. On April 23, 1763, the *North Briton*, No. 45, appeared in which a severe attack was made upon the king's speech. The writer assailed the desertion of the King of Prussia by England, the obnoxious Excise Act, and the favouritism shown to Scotchmen and Jacobites.

The *North Briton* said: "The King's Speech has always been considered by the legislature, and by the public at large, as the Speech of the Minister. It has regularly, at the beginning of every session of Parliament, been referred by both Houses to the consideration of a committee, and has been generally canvassed with the utmost freedom, when the minister of the crown has been obnoxious to the nation.

"This week has given the public the most abandoned instance of ministerial effrontery ever attempted to be imposed on mankind. *The minister's speech* of last Tuesday is not to be paralleled in the annals of this country. I am in doubt whether the imposition is greater on the Sovereign or on the nation. Every friend of his country must lament that a prince of so many great and amiable qualities, whom England truly reveres, can be brought to give the sanction of his sacred name to the most odious measures, and to the most unjustifiable public declarations, from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour, and unsullied virtue.

"A despotic minister will always endeavour to dazzle his prince with high-flown ideas of the *prerogative* and *honour* of the *crown*, which the minister will make a parade of *firmly maintaining*.

I wish as much as any man in the kingdom to see the *honour* of the *crown* maintained in a manner truly becoming *Royalty*. I lament to see it sunk even to prostitution.

"The *King of England* is not only the first magistrate<sup>1</sup> of this country; but is invested by the law with the whole executive power. He is, however, responsible to his people for the due execution of the royal functions, in the choice of ministers, etc., equal with the meanest of his subjects in his particular duty."<sup>2</sup>

These declarations aroused the anger and indignation of the court party, who resented them as a personal attack upon the prerogatives of the king, and it was resolved to prosecute the author for libel.

Though Wilkes was a member from Aylesbury and could claim immunity from arrest except for high treason, yet the government decided to take action and Lord Halifax issued a general warrant, without specifying the names of the persons accused, and sent the king's messengers to apprehend "the authors, printers, and publishers of the incriminated paper and seize their papers." No less than forty-nine persons were arrested. When the publisher indicated that Wilkes was the author of the article in the *North Briton*, he was immediately arrested, his house ransacked, and his papers seized. Led before Lord Halifax, Wilkes refused to answer any questions and protested against the illegality of his arrest on a general warrant; but in spite of his protest, Lord Halifax sent him to the Tower and refused to allow him to see his friends, or consult a lawyer.

In the meantime his friends applied for a writ of Habeas Corpus and Wilkes was brought before the Court of Common Pleas, where Chief-Justice Pratt pronounced his arrest illegal on the ground that as a member of Parliament he was secured from arrest except on the ground of treason, felony, and actual breach of the peace, saying that Wilkes was "entitled to his privilege as a Member of Parliament, because, although that privilege does not hold against a breach of the peace, it does against what only tends to a breach of the peace."<sup>3</sup>

Chief-Justice Pratt also decided two other constitutional points: first "that warrants to search for, seize, and carry away papers"

<sup>1</sup>"In the first speech of James I to his *English Parliament*, March 22, 1603, are the following words, That I am a SERVANT is most true—I will never be ashamed to confess it my principal honour, to be the GREAT SERVANT of the Commonwealth."—Journals of the House of Commons, Vol. I, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>*North Briton*, Nos. 1-46. No. 45, p. 302.

<sup>3</sup>Treloar, "Wilkes and the City," p. 14.



on a charge of libel were illegal; secondly, general warrants without specifying the name of the person to be arrested were contrary to law. On this decision Wilkes was released and he at once brought action against the Under-Secretary of State, Mr. Wood, and obtained £4,000 damages. This was a great triumph for Wilkes and served to make him the popular hero fighting for the liberties of Englishmen.

Moreover, while Wilkes was a good fighter, he was by nature a demagogue, and did not intend to lose the public favour to which the rash actions of the ministers had raised him. He determined to push his advantage against the ministers. So he reprinted all the numbers of the *North Briton* in a single volume with notes on the king's speech, and the right to regard it as only the speech of the ministers. This action, taken against the advice of Lord Temple, his patron, brought him again into collision with the court. At the meeting of Parliament, November 15, 1763, he rose on the first day of the session to justify his conduct; but Grenville, the minister, anticipated him by presenting a royal message calling the attention of the House to the alleged libel. As the majority of the House were in sympathy with the ministry, they voted the *North Briton*, No. 45, to be "a false, scandalous, and seditious libel," and ordered it to be burned by the common hangman.

But the court did not stop at this.<sup>4</sup> At the time of the seizure of Wilkes' papers, it had secured, probably by theft, a small document, privately printed by him, called an "Essay on Woman." There had been only a few copies printed for circulation among his friends. But it was a parody on the "Essay on Man" and contained many obscene and blasphemous sayings. This pamphlet was read before the House of Lords by the notorious and profligate Lord Sandwich, who, with Wilkes, had been a member of the Mendenham Brotherhood, a select society of profligate noblemen who met to mock religion and indulge in all kinds of obscenity. The House of Lords voted the poem to be a breach of privilege and a "scandalous, obscene, and impious libel," and presented an address to the king that Wilkes should be prosecuted for blasphemy.

Meanwhile Wilkes, having fought a duel with a member of Parliament named Martin, who had called him "a coward and a malignant scoundrel," had been severely wounded.<sup>5</sup> This fact

<sup>4</sup> Complete Collections of Papers and Letters of John Wilkes, Berlin, 1769, pp. 80, 95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 70.

increased the popular indignation, and the people charged the ministry with trying to get rid of Wilkes by assassination. Wilkes had gone to Paris to recuperate from his wounds, and in the interval the case for seditious libel was brought up before the Court of King's Bench. Parliament had again taken up the case against Wilkes and voted that "privilege of Parliament does not extend to the case of writing and publishing seditious libels, nor ought to be allowed to obstruct the ordinary course of the laws in the speedy and effectual prosecution of so heinous and dangerous an offence."

Wilkes had written from Paris that sickness would not allow him to travel, and although this statement was supported by the certificates from two French doctors,<sup>6</sup> the House of Commons made no allowance for his condition and expelled him on the 19th of January, 1764, for having written an article of "a scandalous and seditious libel." On February 21st, the Court of King's Bench found him guilty for reprinting *North Briton*, No. 45, and for printing the "Essay on Woman"; and as he did not appear in court, he was outlawed. Notwithstanding these decisions, Wilkes did not lose his hold upon the English public. He was looked upon as a persecuted man who was prosecuted for his political opinions and the people overlooked his "Essay on Woman" because of the disreputable character of the prosecutor, Lord Sandwich.

During the next four years, Wilkes lived abroad, travelling in Europe and financially aided by the leaders of the opposition and by many of his friends among the people. When the Rockingham Ministry came into power in 1765, Wilkes hoped to receive some appointment and endeavoured to secure the position of ambassador to Turkey or the governorship of Canada; but in this he was disappointed. On the change of ministry under the Duke of Grafton, he renewed his application for an appointment, but without success. Failing in all his efforts for recognition by the Whig Government, he determined to return to England on the eve of the general election of 1768.

He returned in March of that year, and in spite of his outlawry, he dared to stand for London as a member of Parliament and received more than 1,200 votes. Although defeated, he at once yielded to the solicitations of his friends and stood for Brentford in the county of Middlesex and was elected at the top of the poll. His election was due, in a large measure, to the

<sup>6</sup> Collection of Papers of John Wilkes, pp. 70, 71.

efforts of Rev. John Horne, later known as Horne-Tooke.<sup>7</sup> The result of the poll was received with an outburst of enthusiasm by his adherents, and the mob in his favour paraded the streets of London, shouting, "Wilkes and Liberty," and forcing all whom they met to join in the cry. Franklin, who was present in London at this time, has told us, "'Tis really an extraordinary event to see an outlaw and exile of bad personal character, not worth a farthing, come over from France, set himself up as a candidate for the capital of the Kingdom, miss his election only by being too late in his application, and immediately carrying it for the principal county. The mob, spirited up by numbers of different ballads sung or roared in every street, requiring gentlemen and ladies of all ranks as they passed in their carriages to shout for 'Wilkes and liberty,' marking the same words on all their coaches with chalk and No. 45 on every door; which extends a vast way along the roads into the country. I went last week to Winchester and observed that for fifteen miles out of the town there was scarce a door or a window-shutter next the road unmarked; and this continued here and there quite to Winchester, which is sixty-four miles." <sup>8</sup>

In the meantime Wilkes gave himself up for trial at the Court of King's Bench over which Lord Mansfield presided. The chief-justice declared that the outlawry of Wilkes was illegal; but his condemnation for seditious libel and blasphemy still remained and the judge confirmed it by sentencing him to twenty-two months' imprisonment and a fine of £1,000. But popular opinion was against the verdict and the people continued to look upon him as a hero persecuted for his advocacy of the liberties of Englishmen.

The election of Wilkes for Middlesex once more brought his case before Parliament. The ministry was not compelled to take cognisance of the fact. It could have ignored him and allowed Wilkes to take his seat at the end of his imprisonment; but Wilkes himself would not allow his case to be passed over. He sent a petition to the House of Commons, complaining of Lord Mansfield and the irregularity of his trial in 1763; and also he sent a letter of Lord Weymouth's to the magistrates before the riot in St. George's Fields, which Wilkes claimed showed that the minister had complicity with the massacre which resulted from the riot. Upon the publication of this letter, the government decided to take action against Wilkes. But instead of referring

<sup>7</sup> Collection of Papers of John Wilkes, pp. 189ff.

<sup>8</sup> Treloar, "Wilkes and the City," p. 56.

the case of Wilkes to the courts, or at least, to the jurisdiction of the House of Lords for an attack upon one of its members, Lord Barrington brought the letter before the House of Commons which decided that it was a libel. On the 3d of February, 1769, Wilkes was expelled from the House on three counts: reprinting *North Briton*, No. 45, the volume of obscene poetry, and the letter to Lord Weymouth.

Many of the opposition party opposed this vote, and even Grenville, who had supported the expulsion in 1763, opposed it now on constitutional grounds. Wilkes was undergoing his sentence of imprisonment for two of these offences, and the preface to the letter to Lord Weymouth, while voted a libel, had not been so determined by the courts; in fact, it was not an offence against the House of Commons. This decision raised a constitutional question of the gravest character, and put the House of Commons in the position of violating the rights of the electors of Middlesex. The electors were not long in taking up the challenge, and on February 16th, they re-elected Wilkes unanimously. The next day the House of Commons, on a motion of Lord Strange, voted that Wilkes, having been expelled, was incapable of sitting in Parliament. While it was recognised that the House might expel a member, it had no power to disqualify one. This action of the House immediately raised a storm of protest, and a large body of the electors of Middlesex formed themselves into a society to protect their constitutional liberties. On March 16th, another election took place at Brentford in Middlesex and Wilkes was again unanimously elected. Next day the House of Commons pronounced the election void. A new candidate was now chosen to oppose Wilkes, a Colonel Luttrell, who had vacated his seat in Parliament for this purpose. In the election which ensued, Wilkes obtained 1,143 votes to Luttrell's 296. In spite of this verdict of the people, the House of Commons, on the 14th of April, declared the election of Wilkes void, and on the 16th, by a vote of 197 to 143, declared that Luttrell was duly elected. On the petition against this vote, the House, on the 8th of May, confirmed their vote by an enormous majority, 221 to 152.<sup>9</sup>

The contest over the Wilkes' election had awakened a great political agitation in the county of Middlesex and the city of Westminster, and on February 25, 1769, the Society of the Bill of Rights was formed under the leadership of Rev. John Horne, Mr. Sawbridge, and Mr. Townsend to defend the "legal, consti-

<sup>9</sup> Lecky, "History of England in the Eighteenth Century," Vol. III, p. 333.

tutional liberty of the subject," and also to solicit money to pay the debts of Wilkes which amounted to £14,000. Within a year this sum was nearly raised and this prevented Wilkes from being detained in prison for debt.

The struggle for liberty in England now became identified with the struggle in America against taxation without representation, and the democrats in America watched with keen interest the election contests in Middlesex. They put themselves into communication with the Society of the Bill of Rights, and in February 1770, the Commons House of South Carolina sent a subscription of £1,500. During the election of 1768, the Sons of Liberty in Boston had written to Wilkes encouraging him in his contest, and Wilkes had written in reply, "As a member of the legislature, I shall always give a particular attention to whatever respects the interests of America which I believe to be immediately connected with, and of essential moment to, our parent country, and the common welfare of this great political system. . . . I hope freedom will ever flourish under your hemisphere as well as ours, and I doubt not from your spirit and firmness, that you will be careful to transmit to your posterity the invaluable rights and franchises which you received from your ancestors. *Liberty* I consider as the birthright of *Every* subject of the British empire, and I hold *Magna Charta* to be in as full force in *America* as in *Europe*." <sup>10</sup>

In March of the next year, Wilkes had written again to Boston, from his prison, "If I had been permitted to take my seat in the House of Commons, I should have been eager to move the *repeal of the late act*, which lays the new duties on paper, paint, and other articles. I would have done this from the full persuasion not only of that act's being highly impolitic and inexpedient, but, in my idea, likewise absolutely unjust and unconstitutional, a direct violation of the great fundamental principle of British liberty." <sup>11</sup>

The case of Wilkes had results much beyond its influence upon his personal fortunes. With regard to himself, it was the means of identifying him with the cause of the people and his popularity in London procured for him the office of sheriff, then alderman, and finally, Lord Mayor of London, besides his election as a member of Parliament. In the country the effect of this controversy was to awaken public agitation on political questions and to revive the old custom of public meetings and petitions

<sup>10</sup> "Letters of John Wilkes and John Hoïne." London, 1771, pp. 163-164.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165.

to Parliament. Seventeen counties and many boroughs addressed petitions to the king, complaining that their rights as freeholders had been violated, and demanding a dissolution of Parliament. In the vanguard of these counties was Yorkshire, which led the way in organising the public opinion of the time, and in suggesting the idea of associations to bring to bear public opinion upon Parliament.

The reaction of the freedom of elections in Middlesex was soon felt in the House of Commons. In January 1770, there was a heated discussion on the constitutional questions at issue. The attitude of the majority in the House of Commons was to ignore the popular clamour and to discredit the petitions of the counties by holding up the people to scorn. Thomas de Grey, brother of the attorney-general, expressed the general feeling when he said, "The discontents that are held up as spectres are the senseless clamours of the thoughtless, and the ignorant, the lowest of the rabble. The Westminster petition was obtained by a few despicable mechanics, headed by the base-born people."

"Were it not for petition-hunters and incendiaries," said Rigby, "the farmers of Yorkshire could not possibly take an interest in the Middlesex election of representatives in Parliament. But supposing that a majority of the freeholders had signed these petitions without influence and solicitation; the majority, even of this class, is no better than an ignorant multitude."<sup>12</sup>

Against these views, Sir George Savile, the representative from Yorkshire, protested: "The greatest evil that can befall this nation, is the invasion of the people's rights by the authority of this House. I do not say that the majority have sold the rights of their constituents; but I do say, I have said, and I shall say, that they have betrayed them. The people understand their own rights and know their own interests as well as we do; for a large paternal estate, a pension, and support in the treasury, are greater recommendations to a seat in this Assembly, than either honesty of the heart or clearness of the head."<sup>13</sup>

Barré pointed out the vital relation between the struggle for the liberties of Englishmen with that of the liberties of Americans. He said: "The people of England know, the people of Ireland know, and the American people feel, that the iron hand of ministerial despotism is lifted up against the people." But

<sup>12</sup> Bancroft's History, Vol. VI, pp. 320-321.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 321.

such opinions had no effect upon the attitude of the House of Commons. Lord North, the first minister, expressed the prevailing sentiment when he thus closed the discussion, "The trumpeters of sedition have produced the disaffection; the drunken ragamuffins of a vociferous mob are exalted into an equal importance with men of judgment, morals and property. I can never acquiesce in the absurd opinion that all men are equal; the contest in America, which at first might easily have been ended, is now for no less than sovereignty on one side, and independence on the other."<sup>14</sup>

But the issue of the freedom of elections was not to be turned aside by such declarations in the House of Commons. Public opinion had been awakened and the demand was raised for reform of Parliament. This found a champion in no less a personage than Lord Chatham, who introduced a bill for reform which would have disfranchised the rotten boroughs and transferred 100 members to the counties. The corruption of the boroughs was well known at the time and its far-reaching extent was set forth in the following facts: "No less than 218 members were returned for counties and boroughs in England and Wales by the nomination of 87 peers, 137 were returned by 90 commoners, and 16 by the Government, making a total of 371 nominee members. Of the 45 members for Scotland, 31 were returned by 21 peers and the remainder by 14 commoners. Of the 100 members for Ireland, 51 were returned by 36 peers and 20 by 19 commoners. The general result was that of the 658 members of the House of Commons, 487 were returned by nomination, and only 171 were representatives of independent constituencies, and these were saturated with bribery and corruption."<sup>15</sup>

These facts, given by a contemporary of this period, justified the popular demand for reform of Parliament. Lord Chatham was, therefore, not overstating the conditions when he said, in supporting his bill for reform, "Whoever understands the theory of the English Constitution and will compare it with the fact, must see at once how widely they differ. We must reconcile them to each other, if we wish to save the liberties of this country. . . . The Constitution intended that there should be a permanent relation between the constituent and the representative body of the people. Will any man affirm that as the House of Commons is now formed, that relation is in any degree preserved? My

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>15</sup> Treloar, "Wilkes and the City," p. 225. Quoted. Oldfield's Representative History.

Lords, it is not preserved; it is destroyed. Let us be cautious, however, how we have recourse to violent expedients."

Speaking of the boroughs, he designated them as "the natural infirmity of the Constitution"; but in regard to the counties, he said, "The knights of the shires approach nearest to the Constitutional representation of the country, because they represent the soil. It is not in the little dependent boroughs, it is in the great cities and counties that the strength and vigour of the Constitution resides, and by them alone, if an unhappy question should ever rise, will the Constitution be honestly and firmly defended. It would increase that strength, because I think it is the only security we have against the profligacy of the times, the corruption of the people, and the ambition of the crown."<sup>16</sup>

A little later in the session, Lord Chatham called attention to the demand of the people for redress and the discontents in England, Ireland, and America; that the people had no confidence in the present House of Commons, who had betrayed their trust. He advocated adding one or more members to the representation of the counties; "in order to operate as a balance, against the weight of the several corrupt and venal boroughs, which perhaps could not be lopped off entirely, without the hazard of a public convulsion."<sup>17</sup>

While Burke disagreed with Lord Chatham on his ideas of reform, yet he was at one with him on the need of a closer relation between the people and their representatives. In his address on "Present Discontents," delivered in 1770, he pointed out the danger to the Constitution from the personal government of the king and the effect of corruption upon the character of the House of Commons. He said: "It had always, until of late, been held the first duty of Parliament to refuse to support government, until power was in the hands of persons who were acceptable to the people, or while factions predominated in the Court in which the nation had no confidence.

"The virtue, spirit, and essence of a House of Commons consists in its being the express image of the feelings of the nation. It was not instituted to be a control upon the people, as of late it has been taught, by a doctrine of the most pernicious tendency. It was designed as a control for the people."<sup>18</sup>

"The House of Commons can never be a control on other parts of government, unless they are controlled themselves by their

<sup>16</sup> "Life of Chatham," Vol. II, pp. 214, 216, 266-7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 267.



constituents; and unless these constituents possess some right in the choice of that House, which it is not in the power of the House to take away."

It was the violation of these principles by the "King's friends" and the use of corruption by the king to control Parliament, that alarmed Lord Chatham and Mr. Burke. Mr. Burke declared that the "popular discontents" arose from something amiss in the Constitution, and "that it is this unnatural infusion of a system of favouritism into a government which in a great part of its constitution is popular, that has raised the present ferment in the nation."<sup>19</sup>

But it was this ferment in the nation, the new tendency to discuss public questions and to hold public meetings, the development of the machinery of political organisation through the County Association, that served to check the growing power of the king and of Parliament. The controversy over the Wilkes election in Middlesex; the mob demonstrations which accompanied the elections; the demagogic character of Wilkes, and his appeal to the passions of the people, all were signs of a new element in political life, a new interest of the people in their own government. Not the least among the permanent results of this agitation was the formation of the radical democratic party under the local politicians which held frequent meetings in the taverns of London and supported the Society of the Bill of Rights.

In 1771, this society had been split in two over a controversy between Horne-Tooke and Wilkes which arose from the desire of Wilkes to use the society to advance his own pecuniary fortunes; Horne-Tooke and his friends withdrew from the society, but not from their interest in public affairs. In the meantime, Wilkes pursued his course and kept his hold upon the people until he achieved his end and was elected Lord Mayor of London. In this year, 1774, a general election took place and the radical party received a new recruit in Lord Mahon, later Earl of Stanhope, son-in-law of Lord Chatham, who stood as a candidate for the city of Westminster. Lord Mahon was supported by Wilkes, much to the distress of Lady Stanhope, who wrote, "I own having Charles set out in the world in the suite of Mr. Wilkes hurts me very much."<sup>20</sup>

Lord Mahon had been educated at Geneva and had imbibed there many principles of democracy and returned to England

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 469.

<sup>20</sup> Ghita Stanhope, "Life of Charles, Third Earl of Stanhope," London, 1914, p. 23.

in sympathy with the democratic movement. In his address to the electors of Westminster, he declared that he "will use his utmost efforts to obtain the expunging of that unconstitutional and most dangerous Resolution of the House of Commons, by which a person having a great minority of legal votes was seated in that House as one of the representatives of the County of Middlesex; to obtain the repeal of the Septennial Act; to obtain also the repeal of the late Quebec Government Bill—I will contribute as much as in me lies to re-establish that happy concord and mutual good-will which once subsisted, to the unspeakable advantage of this kingdom, between Great Britain and her colonies in America."<sup>21</sup>

In a large gathering of the electors of Westminster, in the city hall, numbering 5,000, a meeting was held with Lord Mayor Wilkes as chairman at which the meeting voted to invite the candidates "to support acts for shortening the duration of Parliament; for a more equitable representation of the people; for excluding placemen and pensioners from the House of Commons; for an enquiry in what manner the enormous sums of money arising from the heavy taxes had been applied"; and finally, "that they will insist that the gallery of the House of Commons shall always be opened and the proceedings of their representatives shall be made known to the people." After passing these resolutions, Mr. Sawbridge nominated Lord Mahon, in which he said that "Bred up in constitutional principles he is not likely to depart from them; I know he is endowed with many virtues; I believe he has a mind untainted with any vices. He has an independent fortune and, what is much superior, an independent soul."<sup>22</sup>

This eulogy was not misplaced; for thus early he had shown his independence of mind and his unswerving loyalty to principles which, once having accepted, he adhered to throughout his life. Though defeated in the election, he stood forth as the champion of reform in all the periods of the democratic movement, and no inducement of office or emoluments of the government ever served to turn him aside from this cause to which he devoted his life in the election of 1774.

The defeat of the Reformers in the general elections might have been disastrous for their cause had it not been for the political agitation which was kept alive by the controversy with America. There was a growing feeling of weariness with the

<sup>21</sup> "Life of Earl Stanhope," pp. 24-25.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

election contests after Wilkes had been elected Lord Mayor of London and permitted to take his seat in the House of Commons.

Burke complains of the political apathy of this period. He says, "After a violent ferment in the nation, as remarkable a deadness and vapidty has succeeded." "The people have fallen into a total indifference to any matters of public concern. I do not suppose that there was ever anything like this stupor in any period of our history."<sup>23</sup>

But this attitude was only a passing phase. Events were taking place which were destined to awaken into life the agitation for parliamentary reform. The policy of George III and the Ministry of Lord North in regard to America served to revive the political agitation. In coercing the liberties in America, liberal-minded men and leading Whig statesmen saw a danger to the liberties of England, and they threw all their influence upon the side of conciliation. Wilkes, as Lord Mayor of London, headed a petition to the king, in 1774, against the attitude of the ministry with regard to America. In this it was said, "Your American subjects, Royal Sir, descended from the same ancestors with ourselves, appear equally jealous of the prerogatives of freemen, without which they cannot deem themselves happy. . . . Convinced of the earnest disposition of the Colonists to remain firm in all dutious obedience to the constitutional authority of this kingdom permit us, most gracious sovereign, to beseech you, that those operations of force which at present distract them with the most dreadful apprehensions may be suspended, and that uncontrolled by a restraint incompatible with a free government, they may possess an opportunity of tendering such terms of accommodation as, we doubt not, will approve them worthy of a distinguished rank amongst the firmest friends of this country."<sup>24</sup>

Burke, in his great speech on conciliation of America, in 1775, called attention to the danger to English liberty from the present policy of the government. "For, in order to prove that the Americans have no right to their liberties, we are every day endeavouring to subvert the maxims which preserve the whole spirit of our own. To prove that Americans ought not to be free, we are obliged to depreciate the value of freedom itself; and we never seem to gain a paltry advantage over them in debate, without attacking some of those principles, or deriding

<sup>23</sup> Lecky, "History of England in the Eighteenth Century," Vol. III, p. 367.

<sup>24</sup> Treloar, "Wilkes and the City," p. 168.

some of those feelings, for which our ancestors have shed their blood." <sup>25</sup>

"The fierce spirit of liberty" in America, as Burke called it, sustained by popular government, made a deep impression on the minds of Englishmen and the struggle for democracy in the New World awoke a similar struggle in the Old World. On April 19th, 1775, the "shot was fired at Lexington which was heard around the world," and the reverberations of that conflict of the farmers of Concord with the British troops were felt throughout Europe, and marked the beginnings of that struggle between freedom and autocracy which culminated in the triumph of popular government.

The way that this first battle of the American Revolution looked to Englishmen of the radical party is revealed by the spirit of Horne-Tookey, who put an advertisement in the paper, dated King's Arms Tavern, Cornhill, June 7, 1775, purporting to be an account of what the Society of the Bill of Rights had agreed to, "that the sum of £100 should be raised, to be applied to the relief of the widows, orphans, and aged parents of our beloved American fellow-subjects, who, faithful to the character of Englishmen, preferring death to slavery, were for that reason only, inhumanly *Murdered* by the King's troops at or near Lexington and Concord, in the province of Massachusetts, on the 19th of last April." Signed, John Horne.<sup>26</sup>

For this act, Horne-Tookey was tried two years later and found guilty for libel and sent to prison; but as he pointed out at his trial, when the advertisement was inserted in the papers, Americans were still fellow-subjects defending their liberties. In March 1776, Wilkes introduced a bill in the House of Commons, advocating universal suffrage and annual Parliaments; but his motion was received with disdain and the House passed to the order of the day.

Nevertheless it is significant that this demand for universal suffrage by the radical party in England was made in the same year as the Declaration of Independence. It was a time when men's minds were agitated by the spirit of freedom and were reaching out to a realisation of the true spirit of English liberty. It was in 1776 that Adam Smith published his "Wealth of Nations" in which he alludes to the laws controlling industry and manufactures in America as "a manifest violation of the most sacred rights of mankind," and "in a more advanced state, they

<sup>25</sup> Burke, "Works," Vol. II, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Reid, "Memoirs of John Horne-Tookey," p. 25. London, 1812,

might be really oppressive and insupportable.”<sup>27</sup> It was in this same year that a Yorkshire gentleman, Major Cartwright, who had spent some years in America during his service in the British navy and had formed many friendships there, expressed his sympathy with the American cause and condemned the policy of the ministry of Lord North as a violation of the rights and liberties of Englishmen. On account of these principles, he refused to accept a commission with Lord Howe in his expedition to America.

The democratic movement in England passes beyond the local politics of Westminster with the career of Major Cartwright; and his lifelong advocacy of democratic principles contributed in no small degree to their ultimate triumph in England. It was his advocacy of democracy in numerous pamphlets during many years and his organisation of the Society of Constitutional Information that won his countrymen to the democratic idea and converted some of the leading Whig statesmen and liberal men of the Whig party to reform of Parliament on democratic lines.

The year 1776 was marked by the appearance of several books advocating democratic principles as the foundation of English liberty. Dr. Price published his book on “Civil Liberty” which ran through numerous editions and Granville Sharp published the “Declaration of the People’s Right” to a share in the legislature. Major Cartwright issued his pamphlet on “Take Your Choice” in October 1776. The second edition was published in July 1777, under the title, “The Legislative Rights of the Commonalty Vindicated, or Take Your Choice.” In this book he laid down the principles of democracy and demanded the reform of Parliament on democratic lines. In his work we find evidence that his ideas came from the same source as those expressed in the Declaration of Independence. We find the same basic principles out of which sprang the American Declaration of Rights. And it was with these principles that the popular movement for reform started and which culminated in the reform movement of 1780-85.

In the preface to the second edition, Major Cartwright says, “The author, upon mature deliberation, asserts that “an equal representation of the Commons, and an annual Parliament, are at this day the *Right* of the people, any usages, customs, or acts of Parliament to the contrary notwithstanding.” In the introduction to the work, he states, “The Ministers of the present reign have daringly struck at your most sacred rights, have

<sup>27</sup> Adam Smith, “Wealth of Nations,” Bk. iv, p. 239. Edition of 1823.

aimed through the side of America, a deadly blow at the life of your Constitution, and have shown themselves hostile, not only to the being, but to the very name of liberty. The word itself has been proscribed by the Court; and for any one who dared to utter it, the gentlest appellations have been 'Wilkesite,' republican, and disturber of the peace. Consonant with this spirit, we find the Press too contaminated with writings put forth under the avowed patronage of the Court, which are equally a disgrace to the knowledge of the age, and to the free character of the nation. Their direct aim is to carry us back into the dark regions of passive obedience and non-resistance; the divine right and the unlimited prerogative of kings." <sup>28</sup>

The principles which Major Cartwright laid down were the following: "The all-wise Creator hath likewise made men by nature equal as well as *free*. They are all of 'one flesh,' and cast in one mould." <sup>29</sup>

"Representation of the Commons is, that every individual of them, whether possessed of what is vulgarly called property, or not, ought to have a vote in sending to Parliament those men who are to act as his representatives; and who, in an especial manner, are to be the guardians of public freedom in which the poor surely as well as the rich have an interest; although no one of the Commons can be originally without a right to this privilege of a free man, yet, indeed, it may be justly forfeited by his offending against the laws." <sup>30</sup>

"Though a man should have neither lands nor gold, nor herds nor flocks; yet he may have parents and kindred, he may possess a wife and an offspring to be solicitous for; he hath also, by birthright, a property in the English Constitution; which, if not unworthy of such a blessing, will be more dear to him than would be many acres of the soil without it. These are all great stakes to have at risk; and, we must have odd notions of justice, if we do not allow, that they give him an undoubted right to share in the choice of those trustees, into whose keeping and protection they are committed." <sup>31</sup>

"It is certain that every man who labours with his hands hath a property which is of importance to the State; for Mr. Locke has admirably well observed that 'every man has a property in his own person: the labour of his body and the work of his hands,

<sup>28</sup> "Take Your Choice," p. xxv.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

we may say are properly his.' And further, let it be remembered, that the labouring man or the mechanick can neither have his daily food nor necessities; nor cloathes to cover him, nor tools to work with, without paying taxes in abundance; and that it is the fundamental principle upon which, above all others respecting property, our liberties depend, that no man shall be taxed but with his own consent, given either by his representative, by himself, or in Parliament."<sup>32</sup>

Personality is the sole foundation of the right of being represented; and that property has, in reality, nothing to do in the case. The property of any one, be it more or be it less, is totally involved in the *man*. As belonging to him and to his peace, it is a very fit object of the attention of his representative in Parliament; but it contributes nothing to his right of having that representative."<sup>33</sup>

"I think,' says Lord Harrington, 'the liberty of a cobbler ought to be as much regarded as that of anybody else.' But how do we regard his liberty, if we *take from* him that very *Right* which alone can prove to him that he is free, and which of all others is most essential to the security of his liberty, and which, indeed, is the very being and substance of civil liberty."<sup>34</sup>

"Had we never departed from the true principle of considering every member of the community as a freeman, we had done right. But when we would once form an arbitrary definition of freedom, who shall say what it ought to be? Ought freedom to be annexed to forty pence or forty shillings, or forty pounds per annum. Or why not to four hundred or four thousand pounds? But, indeed, so long as money is to be the measure of it, it will be impossible to know who ought or ought not to be free."<sup>35</sup>

Concerning the right of the poor to vote for members of Parliament—this point I can by no means give up. It is the most sacred of all his rights, and deprived of this, he is degraded below the condition of human nature; he is no longer a *person*, but a *thing*."<sup>36</sup>

Upon these principles Major Cartwright based his demand for universal suffrage and annual Parliaments. His pamphlet was timely and in harmony with the growing movement for parlia-

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> "Life of Cartwright, p. 89. Lord John Russell has said that Major Cartwright was the first to base universal suffrage upon the worth of human personality.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

mentary reform. As a country gentleman his views were not treated with the disdain that was shown to the opinions of Wilkes, and his pamphlet brought him into close relations with many men who were agitating for reform and with many of the leading Whigs. Burke read his pamphlet and entered into correspondence with him; but did not endorse his ideas. Burke's conservatism limited his demand for reform to economic changes and the reduction of the influence of placemen and pensioners of the crown in Parliament. Lord Shelburne, however, who inherited the traditions of Lord Chatham with his democratic sympathies, believed in the necessity of a radical reform and expressed his sympathy with Major Cartwright. While Lord Shelburne always determined his course by the practicability of reform and by the drift of public opinion, yet he went so far as to say in the House of Lords in 1779 that "the House of Commons must be free in every circumstance of its constitution; that the rights of the people, if pushed to their utmost extent, consisted in annual elections and a total change of representation."<sup>37</sup>

But another statesman of more character than Shelburne and who exercised great influence in the Whig party, the Duke of Richmond, was so impressed with the ideas of Major Cartwright that he sought out his acquaintance and this meeting led to a lasting friendship between them. He also adopted his principles and became an advocate of universal suffrage and democracy.

In a letter written in 1779 to Major Cartwright, the Duke of Richmond showed that he was preparing to advocate the principle of universal suffrage in Parliament as the basis of reform. He said: "With regard to the other part of your letter and plan of rendering the House of Commons a true representation of the people, I have, from the beginning, thought it founded upon true principles; and as such, if executed, would bid fairest of any I know to destroy corruption and restore vigour to the Constitution. My great difficulty has always been how your plan, or anything like it, can ever be carried into execution. I almost despair that any House of Commons, constituted like the present, could be induced to pass such a self-denying law. I am convinced that nothing but an irresistible cry from without doors could induce them to vote it. . . . However, I am far from refusing myself to any reasonable attempt. I have constantly, in conversation, endeavoured to prepare the minds of the people for such consideration; and I am at this time engaged in forming

<sup>37</sup> "Life of Cartwright," p. 113.



a plan which I believe would much coincide with your opinions.”<sup>38</sup>

That a man of the standing of the Duke of Richmond in the Whig party should have expressed such ideas reveals how much the pressure of the American conflict and the principles for which the Americans were fighting had destroyed the Whig faith in the ascendancy of Parliament. When the Whigs saw the House of Commons prostituted at the behest of the king and its majority composed of the creatures of the court, they turned to ideas of reform. The most far-sighted among them came to see that no reform could be effective which did not destroy the rotten boroughs and remove the placemen from the House of Commons; and they realised that this could be done only by restoring the old rights of the people and extending the franchise in all boroughs to correspond to that of the open boroughs like Preston and Westminster. It was but a stepping-stone from this to the principle of universal suffrage. It was with these ideas that the reform movement of 1780 opened and ended in 1785 by bringing the English nation a step nearer to the triumph of the democratic idea.

It was probable that but for the American conflict, George III would have succeeded in restricting the rights and liberties of Englishmen. And it was the struggle of Englishmen beyond the seas that decided that Englishmen at home should not be brought into subjection to the crown. The Declaration of Independence announced the great principles of English freedom—principles which once clearly declared were destined to be accepted by the people and to give rise to the democratic movement in England.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

## CHAPTER II

### DEMOCRACY AS AN IDEA: REFORM MOVEMENT OF 1780-85

THE year 1780 is notable in English history as marking the beginning of a reform movement which grew in strength with the progress of the American war and reached its climax with the coming of peace in 1783. This movement was the direct result of the disasters of the war and owed its influence to the spread of the principles of English freedom engendered by the American war. The years preceding 1780 had been rather discouraging for the reformers and many had despaired of ever awakening the nation to the need of reform; but with the beginning of that year, the prospects brightened with the organisation of the Yorkshire Association and the spread of the agitation for reform in many of the counties and boroughs of England.

The growing disasters of the American war led to an increase of the public debt, decay in manufactures, the spread of unemployment, and augmentation of the rates for relief. Such conditions produced great discontent which was expressed first by a meeting of gentlemen at York's Tavern, December 31, 1779. Out of this informal meeting developed the Yorkshire Association, which, at a meeting on January 21, 1780, passed resolutions "to promote regulations for shortening the duration of Parliaments and for obtaining a more equal representation of the people."<sup>1</sup>

It also approved the following pledge to be demanded from all the members of Parliament from Yorkshire County: "I do promise and engage, on the word of a man of honour, that I will support the propositions for enquiring into and correcting the gross abuses in the expenditure of public money, for shortening the duration of Parliaments, and for obtaining a more equal representation of the people in a parliamentary way, to the utmost of my power."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

The Yorkshire Committee, under the leadership of the Rev. Christopher Wyvil, entered into correspondence with other counties and associations; committees were established on the Yorkshire plan and resolutions of a similar character were adopted. These counties embraced Wiltshire, Bedfordshire, Dorsetshire, Berkshire, Essex, Hertford, Surrey, and the great constituency of Westminster together with many of the leading cities and boroughs. Some of the counties limited their demands to economic reform; but most of them went further in advocating parliamentary reform; passed resolutions to this effect, and sent petitions to Parliament.

The spring months of 1780 were marked by great political activity and an increasing agitation in favour of reform. At the end of February, six counties appointed committees to consider a "Plan of Association," "on legal and constitutional grounds, for supporting the petitions, and other measures conducing to restore the freedom of Parliament."<sup>3</sup>

These counties were Yorkshire, Essex, Sussex, Dorsetshire, Middlesex, Gloucestershire, Hertford, Surrey, and the city of Westminster. Later at a meeting of the deputies of the counties held at the Great-Room in King Street, York, March 14, 1780, deputies were present from the counties of Kent, Huntingdonshire, Devonshire, Buckinghamshire, and the cities of London, Nottingham, and Newcastle.<sup>4</sup>

At this meeting the following resolutions were passed:

"First, Resolved, That a diligent examination be made into all the branches of the receipt, expenditure, and mode of keeping and passing accounts of public money, in order to obtain the plan of reform requested by the petitions of the people.

"Second, Resolved, That there be sent to the House of Commons, in addition to the present representatives of the counties, a number of members not less than one hundred, to be chosen, in due proportion, by the several counties of the Kingdom of Great Britain.

"Third, Resolved, That the members of the House of Commons be annually elected to serve in Parliament."<sup>5</sup>

It also urged that all freeholders in the counties, cities and boroughs, support these resolutions at the next general election, and sign the articles of the association; and, to strengthen their cause, that a committee be formed to draw up a plan of union

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

and association. Later, at the meeting held by the committee, on March 25th, the third resolution was changed from annual to triennial Parliaments.<sup>6</sup>

It very soon became evident that all the counties were not in agreement with these measures of reform. Some like Essex would support only economic reform; others like Dorsetshire advocated more radical changes.<sup>7</sup> In April, the meeting of the county of Dorsetshire passed, among others, the following resolution: "That it is the opinion of this meeting, that the people of England have, and always had, a clear, unalienable, indefeasible right to an adequate and equal representation, as well as an annual election of their representatives, founded on stronger grounds than that of any act or acts of Parliament; and that the attainment of those important constitutional objects is the most effectual expedient for restoring and securing the independence of Parliament."<sup>7</sup>

While the political agitation continued, there was an increasing number of the Reform party who inclined more and more towards universal suffrage as the only adequate method of reforming Parliament. This view was held by the Society of Constitutional Information, which had been organised by Major Cartwright, Capel Lofft, and Dr. Jebb. Among its members were the Duke of Richmond, Earl of Derby, Earl of Effingham, Lord Surrey, Dr. Price, and Rev. C. Wyvill. This society published many pamphlets and papers relating to reform. Among others, two pamphlets by Major Cartwright, "Declaration of Rights," and "The People's Barrier against Undue Influence and Corruption." These pamphlets by Major Cartwright were read with sympathy and won over many of the liberal-minded noblemen and gentlemen of England to reform.

In these writings, Major Cartwright laid down the principles "that parliaments were originally annual, and the birthright of Englishmen; at the same time taking care to maintain, that though the English had the ancient right to plead in behalf of their claim, yet that they possessed, also, an inherent right, exclusive of any such ancient precedent."

In his "Bill of Rights and Liberties," he argued for universal suffrage: "With regard to the common right of nature, we are all equal; nor can we think it any degradation to ourselves, that the poorest persons in the community should enjoy, in common with ourselves, the natural means of self-preservation, and any

<sup>6</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. I, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

of those blessings bestowed by our Creator equally and freely to all."<sup>8</sup>

The Society of Constitutional Information of Cambridge adopted principles in harmony with those of Major Cartwright. In the declaration of this society we read: "1. That, in our opinion, every individual of mankind is born with a natural right to life, liberty, and property.

"2. That the associating of many individuals into one collective body, is for the security, and not for the suppression, of natural rights.

"3. That the consent of the people is the true origin, and the happiness of all; the only worthy end of civil government.

"6. That one right of the people of Great Britain is, to make laws for their own government.

"7. That our ancestors, in very remote times, used to make their own laws, and elect their own officers; and that in later times every freeman voted for representatives in Parliament; for it was only in the reign of Henry the Sixth that voting was restrained to freeholders of forty shillings.

"8. That the present state of Parliamentary representation is extremely defective, and ought to be reformed."<sup>9</sup>

And the society passed a resolution to work for the ends of reform by "Constitutional and peaceable measures." Many of the phrases in these declarations show a marked influence of the American Declaration of Independence of 1776.

Moreover, the principles of the Cambridge Society were not an isolated instance of men holding extreme opinions. The great constituency of Westminster also took advanced ground. The sub-committee under the chairmanship of Sheridan advocated annual Parliaments and called attention to the injustice of the present franchise with its forty-shilling freeholders and rotten boroughs. The committee pointed out that the limitation in the number of electors was the result of the disfranchising Act of Henry VI, limiting the right of elections to the knights of the shire, to "persons having free lands or tenements, to the value of 40s. by the year at least."

The committee presented the facts as to the effects of this disfranchising act: "That it appears to this sub-committee, that according to the most received calculations, the number of the inhabitants of England and Wales is above five millions. That of these, nearly twelve hundred thousand are supposed capable of

<sup>8</sup> "Life of Cartwright," p. 137.

<sup>20</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. I, p. 215.

voting, as the Constitution stood before the restrictive Act above quoted. That of this number, not more than 214,000 are at present admitted to vote. That of these: 135,000 freeholders elect 92 members for 52 counties; 43,000 citizens, freemen, and others, elect 52 members for 23 cities and two universities.

"Forty-one thousand electors choose 369 members for 192 towns and boroughs; that 50 of these members are returned by 340 electors. And a number of scarcely above 6,000, being a majority of the voters of 129 of the boroughs, return 257 representatives, which is a majority of the whole English House of Commons and the efficient representation of above five millions of people.<sup>10</sup>

"That considering the representation with reference to property, it appears that many counties return a number of representatives, out of all proportion to what they contribute to public revenue, as is evident from the stating a single instance: that Cornwall has been calculated to pay to land-tax and subsidy, sixteen parts, out of five hundred and thirteen, and sends members to Parliament forty-four; while Middlesex pays not less than in the proportion of two hundred and fifty-six, and sends members eight. That the inequality of the representation of this country, with regard to property, is still greater than when estimated according to the number of its inhabitants."<sup>11</sup>

On the strength of this report, the Committee of Westminster, under the direction of Charles J. Fox, voted for annual Parliaments and the need of a more adequate representation of the people and that the present representation was a "departure from the first principles of the Constitution."

It is worthy of notice that at this meeting held in March 1780, no action was taken on universal suffrage; but when the petitions for redress of grievances had been negatived in the House of Commons by a vote of 233 to 215. then we find a demand for a larger extension of the suffrage.

The sub-committee submitted a report on May 27, 1780, in which it came out squarely for universal suffrage, and presented a plan for a redistribution of districts based upon this principle. In their report, they said "that the restoration of the House of Commons of Parliament to freedom and independency, by the interposition of the great collective body of the nation, is essentially necessary to our existence as a free people.

"An equal representation of the people in the great council of

<sup>10</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. I, p. 215.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

the nation, annual elections, and the universal right of suffrage, appear so reasonable to the natural feelings of mankind, that no sophistry can elude the force of the arguments which are urged in their favour; and they are rights of so transcendent a nature, that, in opposition to the claim of the people to their enjoyment, the longest period of prescription is pleaded in vain."<sup>12</sup>

The reasons which the committee gave for universal suffrage are of much interest in view of the fact that its report fell into the hands of the workingmen who led in the reform movement of 1792 and from that time became a cardinal principle of the working-class demands in the nineteenth century.

These were that "the exercise of the poor man's elective right is therefore essential to his freedom, and although, in ordinary cases, he may sometimes dispose of his suffrage without a proper regard to its importance, yet, when public calamity demonstrates that public confidence has been abused, the opportunity of rectifying the evil by a more judicious delegation will probably not be neglected." "It may also be observed, that no consideration would have a stronger tendency to generate proper sentiments of affection to the community, and more effectually recall the minds of the rising generation from a course of dissipation and attachment to unworthy gratification, than the perception of that share of political consequence, which the restitution of the universal right of suffrage would afford."

"At a certain age all the male inhabitants of this kingdom, with a few exceptions, are subject to the obligation of serving in the militia. Shall a man therefore be thought unworthy of a suffrage in the election of his Representative, and at the same time shall his fellow-citizens intrust to his fidelity and courage whatever they hold dear? Is it reasonable to deny to a citizen, when he has attained to maturity in his mental capacity, the common privilege of a freeman, the right of being governed by laws, to which the assent of himself, or his representative, has been obtained, and at the same time to avail ourselves of his bodily strength? Is it generous, is it politic, to treat him as an alien in the community, at the moment he may be ornamenting it by the powers of his understanding, or defending it by his arms?"<sup>13</sup>

These views on universal suffrage were held by an aggressive minority of the Reform party; but they did not meet with acceptance by the majority of the Whig party or by the associations. Nevertheless, they had an advocate in the Duke of Richmond who

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235-6.

made a motion to bring in a bill for universal suffrage in the House of Lords on June 10, 1780. While the House of Lords rejected the motion and passed to the order of the day, yet it served to bring the question to the attention of Parliament. But we are told by Walpole that the Duke of Richmond, seeing that his motion "was rejected and little supported even by his own party, was disgusted and went off into the country."<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately the motion for universal suffrage was made at the time of the Gordon riots, which alarmed London and produced a reaction in favour of law and order. These riots were caused by the Protestant mob, who were opposed to granting greater liberty to Catholics. The excesses committed by the mob furnished a strong argument against giving the vote and turned many against the cause of reform. This event was disastrous to the reform movement and put the associations upon the defensive. They spent the summer in apologising for the riots and in endeavouring to separate them from the cause of reform. Lord North was quick to seize the advantage which the reaction against reform gave him and he dissolved Parliament in September and won a sweeping victory at the polls. This was followed by a period of discouragement and inactivity among the reformers. But this indifference did not last very long. In January 1781, the Yorkshire Association came again to the front and met at York and voted to form a committee of fifty members and to send "Mr. Wyvill and two other deputies to London with very sober instructions, restraining them to the pursuit of economy in public money, and of lessening the influence of the Crown to obtaining 200 additional County Members." The committee also sent an address to the electors of the counties, cities, and boroughs in which they attacked the corruption of Parliament and the undue influence of the crown. "The balance of our Constitution had been wisely placed by our fore-fathers in the hands of the counties and principal cities and towns; but by the caprice and partiality of our Kings, from Henry VI, down to Charles II, it was gradually withdrawn from them, and by the addition of two hundred Parliamentary Burgesses, was wholly vested in the inferior boroughs. From that latter period, the mischief of this irregular exercise of Royal authority has been increased by the silent operation of time. Many unrepresented towns have risen into population, wealth, and consequence in the Kingdom; and many boroughs have sunk into indigence, or have

<sup>14</sup> Walpole, "Memoirs of George III," Vol. II.



even totally disappeared, without a trace of their existence left behind them, except the privilege of nominal representation. In these decayed boroughs, the Crown and a few great families notoriously nominate Representatives who form a clear majority of the House of Commons."<sup>15</sup>

They urged sending petitions to Parliament to increase the members from the counties by 100 new members and to limit the duration of Parliament to three years. In the campaign of the last year, it was discovered that such a plan would best unite all the Reform party. Many associations sent petitions to Parliament for redress of grievances and reform, but they were disregarded by the ministry, which continued its policy of the war and defied the Opposition and the Reformers.

However, in spite of the checks which the Reformers had received, they continued their agitation. In November 1781, the Duke of Richmond made a speech, calling attention to corruption and pleading for annual Parliaments and a more equal representation; but "as he saw these were not likely to be obtained, he believed he should come little more to Parliament."

Walpole's comment on this attitude was: "This was one of the great evils produced by the absurdity of the Yorkshire Associates. They deprived the country of the honestest and most useful man in the House of Lords at such a moment. When every mouth should have been opened to pull down a set of Ministers who had brought such ruin and disgrace on their country, was that a time to distract the best men with speculative opinions, and on which by their being speculative, no hundred men in England would agree?"<sup>16</sup>

But in December 1781, the news arrived of the surrender of Cornwallis, and this event sealed the fate of the ministry of Lord North. Due to the importunity of the king, the ministry continued to hold office for a few months longer; but under the pressure of public opinion and the demand to make peace with America, Lord North resigned and the Whig Ministry under the Marquis of Rockingham came into power. He accepted office only on the understanding with the king that he would support the ministry in its economic reforms and in its efforts to make peace with America.

The changed political outlook had not been without its effects upon the plans of the Reformers. With the beginning of

<sup>15</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. I, p. 310.

<sup>16</sup> Walpole, "Memoirs of George III," Vol. II, p. 476.

1782, the prospects of the Reformers became brighter and the impending fall of the ministry of Lord North and the prospect of the accession of the Whigs to power, raised hopes that a reform of Parliament would be considered by the House of Commons. The Reform party was elated by the addition to their ranks of William Pitt, the second son of Lord Chatham, who had entered Parliament in 1780 and who, by his vigorous attacks upon the policy of the ministry, had won his way into the front rank of parliamentary debaters and had established his place as one of its future leaders. Early in the session of Parliament, a number of friends of reform had met at the house of the Duke of Richmond and decided that the time had come to raise the issue of reform in the House of Commons and they persuaded Pitt to make the motion to bring in a bill. When Lord Rockingham formed the new ministry, at the end of March 1782, the deputies of the associations met at York and decided to cease agitation for reform and to trust the new ministers at least for the present, and then adjourned for a year. This decision was due to the fact that the Duke of Richmond had entered into the ministry and had extorted from his colleagues the promise that they would allow a motion to be made in the House of Commons for a committee to examine into the mode of representation. In accordance with the understanding of the Duke of Richmond with the Yorkshire Association, Pitt moved on the 7th of May, 1782, for a "Committee to be appointed to enquire into the present state of the representation of the Commons of Great Britain in Parliament."

Mr. Pitt called attention in his speech to the rotten state of the boroughs and that many were under the control of the Treasury; others had no actual existence. "They had no existence in property, population, in trade or in weight of any kind," and they were the slaves and the subjects of persons who claimed the property; others still were put up for sale and some "of them belonged more to the nabob of Arcot than they did to the people of Great Britain." He concluded by saying, "there was no man in that House who had more reverence for the Constitution, and more respect, even for its vestiges, than himself. But he was afraid that the reverence, and the enthusiasm which Englishmen entertained for the Constitution, would, if not suddenly prevented, be the means of destroying it." And he pointed out that the greatest characters of the kingdom including his father, Lord Chatham, thought that reform was "indispensably necessary." Sir George Savile supported the motion and gave his

opinion that "the House might as well call itself the representatives of France as of the people of England."<sup>17</sup>

But after a considerable debate, the motion was lost by a vote of 161 to 141. This vote marks the high-water mark that was reached in the House of Commons for the issue of reform. Never again, until reform was carried fifty years later, did its advocates poll so large a vote. That the motion was lost by only twenty votes was said to be due to the indifference of Lord Rockingham and to the opposition of Burke, both of whom were away from the House when the vote was taken. This may well have been so; for Lord Rockingham, in the previous year, had some differences with the Yorkshire Reformers and refused to commit himself to anything beyond economic reform.

However, the Reformers were not discouraged; for almost immediately after the rejection of the motion for reform in the House of Commons, they held a meeting at the Thatched House Tavern in London, on May 18th, a meeting which became famous in the annals of reform, and resolved that "application should be made to Parliament by Petition from the collective body of the people in their respective districts, requesting a substantial Reform of the Commons' House of Parliament."

This meeting was attended by many notable leaders of the Reform party, among whom were Lord Mahon, Duke of Richmond, Sir Cecil Wray, Earl Surrey, Wilkes, Major Cartwright, Wyvill, Jebb, and not least, William Pitt.

It is to be noted that the plan of reform agreed to was stated in general terms; for there had been too much disagreement among the friends of reform to hazard its success by placing before the people a definite programme. The more radical members of the party, however, had not receded from their principles. Though the Rockingham Ministry had carried through the plan of economic reform under the leadership of Burke, still the Reformers hoped that a more effectual measure of reform would be forced upon the ministry by the pressure of public opinion.

To influence public opinion, the Society of Constitutional Information, organised by Major Cartwright in 1778 to educate the people in the principle of democracy, renewed its activities by distributing speeches, addresses, and pamphlets in support of parliamentary reform. They reprinted the speech which Wilkes had delivered in the House of Commons in 1776 in favour of universal suffrage, and made a direct appeal to the workingmen to enlist them in the cause of reform, saying to them, "Let your

<sup>17</sup> Tract. Annual Register, 1782.

condition be ever so humble, when any one tells you that you should mind your own business and not meddle with State affairs, be assured he is either a knave or a fool."

But this appeal had no effect upon the working classes; for they were still too ignorant and too little accustomed to think upon public affairs to feel that the reform movement could affect their condition.

The defeat of reform in the preceding May 1782, and the passing of the measures for economic reform by the government, had cooled the ardour of many of the country gentlemen who had been interested in the reform movement. They had desired a moderate reform, but had no sympathy with annual parliaments and a more equal representation. Moreover, the death of the Whig leader, the Marquis of Rockingham, in July, and the retirement, in consequence, of Fox, Lord John Cavendish, and Keppel from the new ministry under Lord Shelburne, weakened the forces of reform. Pitt, however, who entered the ministry under Shelburne, carried with him a large number of Reformers and the leaders of the Yorkshire Association. This association drew up a new scheme of reform in which it advocated that "fifty of the worst of the rotten boroughs should be abolished, that the electors of the disfranchised boroughs should be given votes in the county, and that they should also be compensated for their lost privileges; that the hundred members taken from the rotten boroughs should be given to the counties; that the Septennial Act should be repealed; that, in the counties, votes should be given to copy-holders, and that the scot parliamentary system should be reformed." A circular to this effect was sent out to all the counties and cities; and favourable replies were received from many of the counties like Sussex and Gloucester and the cities of Westminster, Glasgow, Portsmouth, and Southwark.

Fitt did not agree to these details of reform, but would go no further than to agree to the general principle of a "substantial and practicable reform of Parliament." As a responsible statesman he would not commit himself to any specific plan of reform. At this time Pitt had the strong support of Lord Mahon who represented the more ardent Reformers and was a leading member of the Society of Constitutional Information.

Lord Mahon continued to work in harmony with Pitt as long as he supported the cause of reform, and in the days when Pitt had few friends in the House of Commons and was opposed by the array of Fox and his adherents, Lord Mahon's support and sympathy were not to be despised.

In February 1783, while Pitt was still Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Ministry of Shelburne, the Yorkshire Association sent up to the House of Commons a petition signed by 10,000 names in favour of reform, and similar petitions were sent from many other counties. The hopes of the Reformers rose high, but they were dashed to the ground when the coalition of Fox and North overthrew the ministry of Shelburne in the end of March 1783; for in this ministry, Shelburne had been in sympathy with reform and Pitt had been an open advocate.

In the new Coalition Ministry, North was opposed to reform and Fox was never an ardent supporter of it. The formation of the new ministry raised a storm of protest and indignation throughout the country; for it was a political combination of men who were opposed in principle and who sacrificed their principles for the sake of office.

This alliance of Fox with Lord North at once divided the forces of reform; one part sided with Fox and the other rallied around the standard of Pitt. But in spite of these adverse conditions, Pitt still adhered to the cause of reform and brought the question again before the House of Commons on the 7th of May, 1783, exactly one year from the day that he had made his first motion. Backed by numerous petitions, he hoped to make an impression upon the House. He began his speech by eulogising the Constitution and then went on to show that "the disastrous consequences of the American war, the immense expenditure of the public money, the consequent heavy burthen of taxes, and the pressure of all the collateral difficulties produced by the foregoing circumstances, gradually disgusted the people, and at last provoked them to 'turn their eyes inward on themselves,' in order to see if there was not something radically wrong at home, that was the chief cause of all the evils they felt from their misfortunes abroad."<sup>18</sup>

They found the source for this state of affairs in the present condition of the House of Commons where "the spirit of liberty and the powers of check and control upon the crown and the executive government were greatly lessened and debilitated. Hence clamours sprung up without doors—a spirit of speculation went forth, and a variety of schemes, founded in visionary and impracticable ideas of reform, were suddenly produced."

The first scheme he alluded to was that of universal suffrage; "and this mode, he understood, was thought by those who patronised it to be the only one that was consistent with true liberty in

<sup>18</sup> Pitt's Speeches, Vol. I, p. 45.

a free constitution, where every one ought to be governed by those laws only to which all have actually given their consent, either in person, or by their representative."

Pitt utterly rejected this scheme, and said that it introduced a species of slavery of the majority over the minority. The second scheme was that of doing away with the rotten boroughs entirely; but he held this to be unwise and the better way was to give more power and influence to the counties which would counteract the undue influence of the boroughs. For this end, he proposed to gradually disfranchise the boroughs as their corruption became evident in the elections, and "that an addition of knights of the shire, and of representatives of the metropolis, should be added to the state of the representation."<sup>19</sup>

The House of Commons did not think the question worthy of debate and passed to the order of the day by a vote of 293 to 149. Fox voted with Pitt on this occasion, but without any enthusiasm for the question. The coalition of Fox and Lord North had chilled his interest in reform and had set back its progress in the House of Commons.

But this fresh defeat did not check the ardour of the Reformers. Pitt told the Yorkshire Association that he only waited a seasonable opportunity to renew his motion for reform. The effect of the defeat of reform upon the Duke of Richmond was to impress him with the necessity of proposing a more extensive measure of reform and of enlisting the masses of the people in its support. The reforming spirit had spread to Ireland, and Colonel Sharman of the Irish Volunteers had written to the Duke of Richmond to ask him for his views on the subject. The duke had replied in a letter which afterwards became famous in the reform movement and was one of the great factors in enlightening the workingmen and awakening in the working classes the spirit of democracy. So important did this letter become in its influence upon the democratic movement of 1792-93, and the part it played in the state trials of 1794, that the reasons which the Duke of Richmond gives for universal suffrage are worthy of consideration.

The letter was written in August 1783, and began as follows:

"I have no hesitation in saying, that from every consideration which I have been able to give to this great question, that for many years has occupied my mind, and from every day's experience since, to the present hour I am more and more convinced, that the restoring the right of voting universally to every man, not incapacitated by nature by want of Reason, or by law for

<sup>19</sup> Pitt's Speeches, Vol. I, pp. 45, 47, 51. London, 1817.

the commission of crime, together with annual elections, is the only reform that can be effectual and permanent. . . . I am further convinced, that it is the only reform that is practicable.' ”

The reasons which he gives for this opinion are first, that it will cure the indifference of the people to politics, and, in consequence, their acquiescence in the corruption of Parliament. He continues, “Not one proselyte has been gained from corruption, nor has the least ray of hope been held from any quarter, that the House of Commons was inclined to adopt any other mode of reform. . . . It is from the people at large that I expect any good. And I am convinced that the only way to make them feel that they are really concerned in the business, is to contend for their full, clear, and indisputable rights of Universal Representation.

“Second, that the Yorkshire plan and that of Mr. Pitt of a reform that meant the abolition of certain rotten boroughs and the transfer of their members to the counties, has this objection, ‘that it proceeds upon the same bad principle as the abuse it pretends to rectify; it is still partial and unequal; a vast majority of the community is still left unrepresented and its most essential concerns, life, liberty, and property, continue in the absolute disposal of those whom they did not chuse, and over whom they have no controul.’ ‘But in the more liberal and great plan of universal representation, a clear and distinct principle at once appears that cannot lead us wrong. Not expediency, but right: if it is not a maxim of our Constitution, that a British subject is to be governed only by laws to which he has consented by himself or his representatives, we should instantly abandon the error; but if it is the essential of freedom, founded on the eternal principles of justice and wisdom, and our unalienable birthright, we should not hesitate in asserting it. Let us then but determine to act on this broad principle of giving to every man his own, and we shall immediately get rid of all the perplexities to which the narrow notions of partiality and exclusion must ever be subject.’ ”<sup>20</sup>

The plan of the Duke of Richmond embraced these changes: the present number of the House of Commons to be retained; all males to be numbered and then divided into districts, with 2,600 members for each district and “by having all the elections throughout the Kingdom in one and the same day, and taken in each parish, all fear of riot and tumult vanishes.”

<sup>20</sup> Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Sharman, by Duke of Richmond, pp. 19, 20, 21. London, 1794.

This plan, he thought, would diminish the costs of elections, saving the expense of conveying voters to distant places to the poll and entertainment. It would also do away with bribery. "The numbers to be bought would be infinitely too great for any purse. Besides, annual Parliaments, by their frequency and by their shortness, would doubly operate in preventing corruption."

He then discusses the objections that might be offered to his plan and among others that universal suffrage might tend to level poverty. "Another subject of apprehension is, that the principle of allowing to every man an equal right to vote tends to equality in other respects and to level poverty. To me it seems to have a direct contrary tendency.

"The protection of property appears to me one of the most essential ends of society; and so far from injuring it by this plan, I conceive it to be the only means of preserving it; for the present system is hastening with great strides to a perfect equality in universal poverty."

To the plea that the franchise should be limited to householders and taxpayers, he replies, "My answer is that I know of no man, let him be ever so poor, who in his consumption of food, and use of raiment, does not pay taxes; and that I would wish to encourage an enthusiasm for his country in the breast of every subject, by giving him his just share in its government. I readily admit, that such an alternation would be a vast improvement; but I must prefer the adhering rigidly to a self-evident principle, especially when attended with no inconvenience in the execution, that I can foresee."<sup>21</sup>

He was also opposed to restoring the veto to the crown. "I object to it as I would to any other prerogative of the crown, or privilege of the Lords, or people, that is not founded upon reason. But I agree, that if the House of Commons was reduced to its natural dependence on the people alone, and the present system of making it the exclusive part of the government was continued, we should approach to a pure democracy more than our constitution warrants, or than I wish to see. I am not for a democratic, any more than for an aristocratic, or monarchic government, solely; I am for that admirable mixture of the three, that our inimitable and comprehensive constitution has established; I wish to see the executive part of government revert to where the constitution has originally placed it, in the hands of the Crown to be carried on by its ministers; those ministers under

<sup>21</sup> Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Sharman, by Duke of Richmond, p. 21.



the controul of Parliament; and Parliament under the controul of the people." <sup>22</sup>

That such an advocate as the Duke of Richmond for universal suffrage and democracy should be found in the ministry of this period, reveals how much the ideas which were fundamental in the American Revolution had pervaded the minds of the liberal noblemen of the Whig party. Though the letter was written in 1783, it passed without criticism by the government. Indeed, while the Duke of Richmond was working with Pitt and the Yorkshire Reformers for parliamentary reform, it is clear that his sympathies were with the more radical wing of the party and he still adhered to the democratic principles of Major Cartwright. But the cause for which they were fighting was hopelessly lost. A deep line of cleavage was now beginning to appear in the ranks of the Reformers.

In December 1783, the Coalition Ministry was overthrown on the India Bill and Pitt assumed the seals of office as the personal choice of the king. Pitt was sustained only by a minority in the House of Commons and men doubted whether the ministry could last many days before the powerful opposition of the coalition majority. But Pitt maintained office in spite of the storm of protest in the House and by his skill in handling affairs daily grew in popularity in the country. He kept on for some months and refused to dissolve Parliament until the time was ripe for a dissolution and Fox and his majority had played into his hands by questioning the prerogative of the king to dissolve without the consent of Parliament.

At the beginning of 1784, the Yorkshire Association renewed the petition to Parliament on reform; but it no longer presented a united front; it was divided on the political questions of the hour, and the issue of the dissolution of Parliament. This led to a secession of the friends of Fox from the association, and it now became an organ of Pitt.

The king dissolved Parliament in March 1784, and a general election followed. The Yorkshire Association threw its influence on the side of Pitt and he obtained a sweeping victory at the polls. Pitt had committed himself to the association and had written to Wyvill in the previous December that he would "put forth his whole power and credit as a man and as a minister, honestly and boldly to carry a plan of Reform, by which our liberties will be placed on the footing of permanent security." <sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>23</sup> Life of Cartwright, p. 99.

This pledge had carried the Reformers over to his side in the elections.

The Reformers had now great hopes of carrying a measure of reform under Pitt and they began to prepare petitions to this effect. Some of the more zealous among them were not content to wait. Alderman Sawbridge, the old radical of Wilkes' days, brought forward a bill in June 1784, and was supported by Lord Mahon, now a close friend of Pitt, though opposed by Pitt himself. Pitt tried to dissuade Sawbridge from bringing forward the bill, saying, "In my opinion it is greatly out of season at this juncture. But I have the measure much at heart, and I pledge myself in the strongest language to bring it forward the very first opportunity next session."<sup>24</sup> Sawbridge persevered in his purpose, and, after a long debate, the bill was rejected by 199 votes to 125, Pitt himself voting against the bill.

This premature movement in bringing forward a bill and its defeat at this time served to check the movement for reform. When the Reformers began their campaign in February 1785 to obtain petitions for reform, the response was not so great as they expected. They sent up many petitions to Parliament from February to April; but the number was small compared to previous years. On April 19, 1785, Pitt asked leave to bring in his Reform Bill which was moderate in its scope and limited to disfranchising some fifty boroughs, and buying out the rights of the electors, if they surrendered them voluntarily. The details of the plan were never published, but Pitt allowed Wyvill to publish the heads of his proposals. Wyvill approved of the plan and characterised it as "the most extensive and effectual, and at the same time the most mild and practicable which had been devised."

But in spite of the moderate spirit of the Reform Bill, Pitt was defeated by 248 votes to 174. He never again risked his power and credit as a man and a minister in the cause of parliamentary reform. After the defeat of reform in Parliament, there was a large gathering of the Reformers at Thatched House Tavern, London, May 24th, 1785, to support Pitt's plan; but Wyvill and his followers were defeated in their efforts to obtain an endorsement for Pitt by 39 to 63 votes. The majority of the Reformers present did not feel that Pitt's plan went far enough in the direction of a real reform. Dr. Jebb had expressed his dissent in a letter to Wyvill at this time. "I certainly wish an union of the people, I will do all in my power to promote one upon

<sup>24</sup> Life of Third Earl Stanhope, p. 62.

a just and comprehensive principle. I will cordially support any reasonable and practicable plan, although it does not immediately proceed to the full extent of my own ideas, provided, the effectual Rights of the people are not reprobated in such a plan, and all further improvements foreclosed; but I will never pursue a line of conduct which would dissociate very many approved friends of the Constitution from our cause, and which vests implicit confidence in a man, who though justly respectable on many accounts, has openly avowed himself, and has openly acted as the Minister of the Crown." <sup>25</sup>

This division among the Reformers set its seal upon the activity of the Yorkshire Association, and at the end of the year, Wyvill tells us, 'the enterprise of agitating for a reform of Parliament was abandoned by the counties which had co-operated with the Yorkshire Committee and the dissolution of that body now took place.' <sup>26</sup>

Pitt had paid his campaign pledges by introducing this measure of reform, and he was not inclined to jeopardise his power by bringing it up again in Parliament. But even if his measure had carried, it would not have met the ideas of those who were working for a real representation of the people and might have acted as a barrier to the democratic movement.

Major Cartwright, who heard Pitt's speech in favour of reform, had been much impressed when Pitt said, "that without Parliamentary Reformation neither the liberty of the nation can be preserved, nor the permanence of a wise and virtuous administration can be secured"; but Pitt and Cartwright stood for two very different principles.

Some time before this period Dr. Jebb had expressed doubts on the sincerity of Pitt in any true reform. As early as 1783, he had written: "Pitt speaks that he is no well-wisher for a reform on the speculative principles of some that have given alarm; I fear he means the constitutional and truly practical principles of Cartright, the Duke of Richmond, and our Society." <sup>27</sup> Dr. Jebb had expressed himself in even stronger terms in 1785 and declared that, "Politically speaking, Pitt was the worst man living, and would go greater lengths to destroy liberty than any minister did before him." But Major Cartwright still flattered himself with the delusive hope of Pitt's sincerity in the cause of reform. <sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Wyvill Papers, Vol. II, p. 457.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> "Life of Cartwright," p. 155.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

But Dr. Jebb was right in his prognostications, which were fulfilled in the next decade of the 18th century.

The reasons for the decline of the reform movement were due, in some measure, to the lukewarm support of Pitt and the divisions in the Yorkshire Association; but in a larger degree, that the reform movement never had the support or sympathy of the masses of the people. It had failed to touch the working classes and had been confined to the county gentlemen and a few liberal-minded noblemen. The enthusiasm for radical reform of Parliament had subsided with the government now in the able hands of Pitt, and with the prosperity of the country, due to the fiscal and economic reforms.

The forces of tradition and conservatism, privilege entrenched in power, were too strong for the Reformers; and after the defeat of Pitt's bill in Parliament, the country seemed to have settled down to the quiet methods of his administration. Moreover, the American Revolution and the outcome of the war only touched the fringe of English society, and the oligarchy of privilege resting upon the ownership of rotten boroughs could not be moved to undertake a reform which would weaken their power and ascendancy.

It would require a deeper upheaval of society, enlisting the forces of the masses of the nation, before reform could be carried. At the same time, the work of the small group of Reformers had not been in vain. They formulated the principles and developed the methods of organisation through which alone reform could be carried to success. It was their work and their ideas which, transferred later to the working classes, awoke in them the desire for political power and imparted to their minds the principles of democracy.

## CHAPTER III

### ENGLISH DEMOCRACY AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

THE French Revolution had a profound influence upon the rise of democracy in England. It awoke the masses from their political apathy and enlisted sympathy for a government based upon the "Rights of Man." At first the significance of the French Revolution was not discerned by the mass of Englishmen. Only those who were interested in politics followed with any understanding the meeting of the States-General in May 1789; but the insurrection of Paris and the fall of the Bastille on July 14th aroused men from their stupor and created an atmosphere of political agitation. This event was hailed on almost all sides as the beginning of a new era in the march of human liberty. Fox was enthusiastic over this event and wrote, "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world! and how much the best!" And he sent his compliments to the Duke of Orleans, saying, "Tell him and Lauzan that all my prepossessions against French connections for this country will be at an end, and indeed most part of my European system of politics will be altered, if this Revolution has the consequences that I expect."<sup>1</sup>

Fox, undoubtedly, expressed the general opinion of the Whig party, and even many of the Tory party, as well as the friends of liberty in England. But his enthusiasm was not shared by Burke, whose conservative views made him look with disfavour upon revolutions and especially upon the democratic movement in France. The course which the National Assembly had followed since July had not commended it to his judgment. The tumults in the Assembly, the abolition of feudalism on the night of the 4th of August; the publication of the Declaration of Rights, and the decision of the Assembly in September for a single Chamber and the suspensive veto, had raised doubts in his mind as to the wisdom of the Revolution and the danger of its tendencies. At the end of September 1789, Burke wrote to his friend, Mr. Windham, who was staying at Paris:

"It does not appear to me, that the National Assembly have

<sup>1</sup> Lecky, "History of England in the Eighteenth Century." Vol. VI, p. 378.

one jot more power than the King; whilst they lead or follow the popular voice, in the subversion of all orders, distinctions, privileges, impositions, tythes, and rents, they appear omnipotent; but I very much question, whether they are in a condition to exercise any function of decided authority—or even whether they are possessed of any real deliberative capacity, or the exercise of free judgment in any point whatsoever; as there is a Mob of their constituents ready to hang them if they should deviate into moderation, or in the least depart from the spirit of those they represent. What has happened puts all speculation to the blush; but still I should doubt, whether in the end France is susceptible of the Democracy that is the spirit, and in a good measure too, the form of the constitution they have in hand: it is, except the idea of the Crown being hereditary, much more truly democratical than that of North America.”<sup>2</sup>

This opinion foreshadowed the line of cleavage which was soon to separate Burke from Fox; split the Whig party in two; and divide England into two rival camps of Reformers and anti-Reformers, conservatives and democrats. But, as yet, the French Revolution continued to be looked upon with favour by liberal men, or with indifference by men of conservative tendencies. Moreover, to Burke more than any other statesman belongs the rôle of having awakened in England the antagonism against the Revolution and aroused the fierce passions of sectarian hate which expressed itself first against the Dissenters and led to the organisation of the Church and King Clubs which were responsible for the riots of Birmingham. But, at the present time, Burke was without much influence; and it was only as the Revolution advanced and its excesses became more marked that he took the lead of the reactionary party. The disfavour with which Burke viewed the Revolution was much increased with the march of the mob to Versailles on October 5, 1789, resulting in the attack upon the queen and the disrespect shown to the king. Burke was so incensed by these acts that he became henceforth the champion of royalty and the crusader against the French Revolution. But public opinion excused this event as the natural excesses of the mob during a time of revolution and still looked upon the work of the National Assembly with favour, in spite of their innovations and destructive tendencies. Nevertheless, there were signs that the Church party in the nation was becoming alarmed by the act of the Assembly in seizing the revenues of the Gallic Church and the confiscation of church property by the

<sup>2</sup> Lord Rosebery, “Windham Papers,” Vol. I, p. 90.

state. In this alarm, Burke led the way. In the debate in the House of Commons in February 1790, over the army estimates, Fox had taken the occasion to praise the French Revolution and to say, "The example of a neighbouring nation had proved that former imputations on armies were unfounded calumnies, and it was now universally known throughout all Europe that a man by becoming a soldier did not cease to be a citizen."<sup>3</sup>

A few days later Burke replied to Fox, and in an elaborate speech denouncing the French Revolution, contended that its example was dangerous to the Constitution and the Government of England in the time of the Stuarts and said that in the present temper of the nation, the Revolution might mislead the people. "Our present danger," he said, "from the example of a people whose character knows no medium is, with regard to government, a danger from anarchy—a danger of being led, through an admiration of successful fraud and violence, to the excesses of a proscribing, plundering, ferocious, and tyrannical democracy. On the side of religion, the danger is no longer from intolerance, but from atheism."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Burke called attention to the fact that the French were making a bad Constitution and in their action against the Church were attacking property. "They have," he said, "with the most atrocious perfidy and breach of faith, laid the axe to the root of all property, and consequently of all national prosperity, by the principles they established and the example they set, in confiscating all the possessions of the Church,' justifying their actions by 'a sort of digest of anarchy, called the "Rights of Man."'"<sup>5</sup>

This speech started an animated discussion in Parliament and was severely criticised by Fox and Sheridan, commended in guarded terms by Pitt, but endorsed unanimously by the Tory majority in the House of Commons. Its immediate effect in the country was to lead to the establishment of Church and King Clubs and to crystallise conservative opinion against the French Revolution and the contagion of its example. But these organisations only stimulated the activities of those who favoured France and looked with sympathy upon the revolutionary movement. On the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, July 14, 1790, a large gathering of the Whig Club and members of Parliament met at a tavern in London, and Sheridan, the chairman of the meeting, proposed the following resolutions: "That

<sup>3</sup> Lecky, "History of the Eighteenth Century," Vol. VI, p. 383.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

this meeting does most cordially rejoice in the establishment and confirmation of liberty in France, and that it beholds, with peculiar satisfaction, the sentiments of amity and good-will which appears to pervade the people of that country towards this kingdom, especially at a time when it is the manifest interest of both states that nothing should interrupt that harmony that at present subsists between them, and which is so essentially necessary to the freedom and happiness not only of the French nation, but all mankind." <sup>6</sup>

The effect of such sentiments endorsed by the Whig Club was to awaken the spirit of reform and the organisation of clubs in sympathy with democratic ideas in the great centres of population. Among the first was the Manchester Constitutional Club, organised in October 1790, by Walker and his friends, whose principles were expressive of the new spirit and radical ideas which were soon to seize upon the minds of the masses. This club declared, that government must be derived from the consent of the governed; that the welfare of the people was the true end of government; that all officials were responsible to the people; that 'no law is fairly made except by a majority of the people; and that the people of Great Britain were not fairly and fully represented in Parliament.' <sup>7</sup>

In Birmingham, Dr. Price, a Unitarian minister and leader of the Dissenters and advocate of democracy, had preached a sermon in November in which he had said: "The people of England had acquired three fundamental rights by the Revolution of 1688: 1. To choose their own governors; 2. To cashier them for misconduct; 3. To frame a government for themselves." This address was the immediate occasion of the publication by Burke of his book on "Reflections on the French Revolution," in which he devoted a hundred pages to the refutation of Dr. Price's thesis.

The book produced a profound sensation and was hailed by the conservative classes as the true interpretation of the French Revolution. On the one hand, the treatise of Burke consolidated the wavering opinion and created a hostile majority in the nation against the Revolution; on the other hand, it provoked a large number of replies to Burke from the Reformers and Liberals. Among the most able and noted were those by Sir James Mackintosh, "*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*," and the "Rights of Man," first part, by Thomas Paine. While the "*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*" by Mackintosh

<sup>6</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke, Vol. II, p. 78.

<sup>7</sup> J. Holland Rose, "William Pitt and the Great War," p. 13.



was the ablest reply to Burke, yet by its style and learning it appealed only to the educated classes and reached only a small group of readers. Mackintosh showed that Burke had not fairly represented the work of the National Assembly and had not only misrepresented the facts, but also had placed an undue stress upon the excesses that accompanied the Revolution. Moreover, in answer to Burke's contention that the English Revolution of 1688 had settled the government for all time on hereditary lines, Mackintosh showed that the Convention of 1688 was revolutionary in character, and that the principles of English liberty rested upon the sovereignty of the people. But it was to Thomas Paine's book, the "Rights of Man," first part, that is due in a large measure the influence which created the democratic movement and spread the principles of democracy among the working classes of Great Britain. His book was published in February 1791, and at once ran through many editions, thousands of copies being sold in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Its success was instantaneous and the book was eagerly bought by the middle classes and distributed through their agency. No work of a political character ever had such a success, and its effect was seen in the democratic organisations which sprang up all over the country whose gospel was Paine's "Rights of Man."

From this period we must date a new spirit which entered into political life and created the demand for parliamentary reform. It was the character of the democracy, of the working classes, who had been looked upon as outside the realm of politics, and designated by Burke as the "swinish multitude," which alarmed the governing classes and led in the end to the prosecution of Paine for seditious writings. Paine's book, the "Rights of Man," had an influence in England commensurate with his work, "Common Sense," in America in 1776, which brought the majority of Americans over to support the Declaration of Independence. Its power was in its simple style and language, fitted to the comprehension of the common man and to the fact that Paine laid down in clear, terse English the principles of popular government and the basis of English liberty. He was the first writer to bring within the knowledge of the working classes the principles of the French Revolution and to have created that ferment of political agitation which took form in the organisation of workmen's societies and the demand for reform on democratic lines.

In the history of the democratic movement in England, Paine has seldom received the recognition which his work deserves.

In this book, he stated, first, the principles of the Revolution of 1688; that the right to reform the government inheres in the nation; that the Convention of that time cannot bind the people forever to the principle of hereditary government as Burke contended. Secondly, he defends the French Revolution by showing the principles on which it was founded and that it was the conversion of the French nation to these principles before the Revolution broke out that led inevitably to the course which the States-General followed. Tracing the early stages of the States-General, he shows that it was pushed on in its revolutionary course by the reactionary tendencies of the king and the court; that the insurrection of July and the march of the mob to Versailles in October 1789, arose from the plots of the court to overthrow the National Assembly and circumvent the will of the nation; that the basis of the Constitution and the destructive tendencies of much of its legislation was necessary from the fundamental principles of liberty embodied in the Declaration of Rights. As to the excesses of the Revolution, he calls attention to the fact that up to the period at which the Revolution had gone, they had been few in comparison with the magnitude of the popular outbreak and that very few men had lost their lives in consequence. The end of his book is devoted to a discussion of the English system of government as at present exercised through the king, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. He emphasises the fact that owing to the rotten boroughs and corruption in the elections, the House of Commons does not represent the nation and that it uses its power to tax the people without representation. Finally, he lays stress upon the principle of the sovereignty of the people and urges reform on the basis of this principle, quoting in its favour the first three articles of the French Declaration of Rights.

"But what we now see in the world, from the Revolutions of America and France, are a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity.

"1. Men are born and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights. Civil distinctions, therefore, can be founded only on public utility.

"2. The end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression.

"3. The Nation is essentially the source of all Sovereignty; nor

can any INDIVIDUAL, or ANY BODY OF MEN be entitled to any authority which is not expressly derived from it."<sup>s</sup>

In the course of his discussion, Paine treats with scant reverence the claims of hereditary power and his remarks are derogatory to the influence of the aristocracy. The value of the book lies in its just appreciation of the meaning of the French Revolution and the system of government derived from it. It taught the English masses the true meaning of the Revolution. But of greater value to the movement of democracy is the fact that it was the first clear statement of democratic principles upon which democracy is based—equality of men in natural rights, the right of every man to liberty, security, property, and a government resting upon the will and the sovereignty of the nation.

His book was published at a time when the social and political conditions were favourable to his theories. The degradation of the people, the corruption of Parliament, the enthusiasm for French ideas, the new agitation for reform—all favoured a reception for his ideas. Within a year, according to Paine, himself, between 40,000 and 50,000 copies of the book were sold. The effect of his book was soon seen in the renewed activity of the Society of Constitutional Information in London which established branches in many cities of England. But more important for the democratic movement was the formation of the London Corresponding Society in January 1792.

This society owed its origin and influence to Thomas Hardy, a shoemaker of London. In many respects, Hardy was a remarkable man. Born in a village of Stirlingshire, Scotland, he was descended from a family of the gentry who had lost their estates through a Scotch feud. Later his family had been reduced in circumstances through the death of his father who was a captain in his Majesty's service. Upon Hardy, as the eldest son, fell the support of his mother and his brothers and sisters. To this end, Hardy took up the trade of his maternal grandfather and became a shoemaker. Coming up to London in 1774, he came into contact with the agitation growing out of the controversy with the American colonies. As he studied the questions at issue, he grew more and more in sympathy with the American views of taxation and representation, until reading the book of Dr. Price on "Civil Liberty," published in 1776, it confirmed him in the opinion "that the American War was both impolitic and unjust." He says, "I saw that it was not only necessary for the happiness of the

<sup>s</sup> Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man," first part, p. 158, London. 1791.

trans-Atlantic patriots themselves that the struggle should terminate in their favour; but that even the future happiness of the whole human race was concerned in the event. From that moment I became one of the warmest and most sincere advocates for the *right* cause."<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, it appears that Hardy had read many of the pamphlets which grew out of the controversy of the war and had watched with some interest the reform movement of 1780-85. But as the movement for reform was confined to the gentlemen of England and touched very little the mass of the common people, it failed to make any strong appeal to him at that time.

But the principles of freedom were stamped upon his mind and the seeds of democracy were planted in his heart which were destined to bear fruit later when the French Revolution shook men out of their stupor and awoke in men the passion for the Rights of Man. The significance of the French Revolution and its tremendous import for the future of humanity made a deep impression upon Hardy. In a letter written in February 1792, he says, "I think it is one of the greatest events that has taken place in the history of the world since the commencement of time."<sup>10</sup>

But the immediate cause of his interest in politics and his determination to enter the political arena was due to his fresh contacts with the proceedings and literature of the reform movement of 1780. It was this study that suggested to him the idea of the London Corresponding Society. He had been reading, towards the close of the year 1791, the political tracts of the Society of Constitutional Information of the years 1779, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, presented to him by a member, T. B. Hollis.

"This drew his attention more closely to the subjects on which he had been accustomed to think and talk a great deal during the American War." The result of his investigations was that "he drew up some rules, with a preamble to them, for the management of the Society which he had projected. These rules he submitted to three friends, whom he had engaged to supper with him one night with a view of obtaining their opinions on the subject."<sup>11</sup>

The upshot of this meeting was the determination to organise a society which would work for parliamentary reform. The first meeting of the society was held on January 25, 1792, at the

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hardy, "Memoirs," p. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 814. Vol. IV, p. 80.

<sup>11</sup> "Memoirs of Thomas Hardy," p. 11.

Sign of the Bell, in Exeter Street in the Strand. "Eight persons were present who were acquainted with each other, and after supper, the question of Parliamentary Reform was discussed and the best means of bringing it about." Hardy then "produced the rules and preamble which he had drawn out; and after they had been read twice, it was proposed that all who wished to become members should subscribe to them, and engage to endeavour, by all the means in their power, to promote the objects the Society had in view."<sup>12</sup> All the individuals present joined the society except one, who took a week to consider the matter and then united with it. At the meeting, they adopted the name of the London Corresponding Society and fixed the dues of each member at a penny a week so that no one on account of the high dues might be deprived from joining the Society. At the next meeting of the Society, the membership was increased by nine and the following week, twenty-four new members were added to the organisation; Margarot was elected president and Hardy was made secretary and treasurer and the total funds amounted to £4, 4s., 2d.

The first letter which Hardy wrote, as secretary, was to the Rev. Mr. Bryant of Sheffield, who had been active in the political agitation of the time. Hardy informed him of the organisation of the society and its purpose "for restoring the right of the suffrage to the unrepresented of the people of Great Britain" and asked him to co-operate with the London Society. At the time that the London Corresponding Society was organised, February 1792, Paine published his second part of the "Rights of Man" which served further to inflame the excited state of men's minds and had a direct influence in increasing the numbers of the society. The teachings of Paine fell upon minds already prepared by political agitation and gave a tremendous momentum to the spread of democratic ideas. The Society of Constitutional Information was stirred to renewed activity and Major Cartwright and Horne-Tooke became its leaders. The effect of Paine's teachings was seen at once in the views of the leading men of the London Corresponding Society whose ideas of reform were tinged with republicanism and the principles of the American democracy. Francis Place, who later became a member of the society, tells us that "all the leading members were republicans—that is, they were all friendly to representative Government. This they were taught by the writings of Thomas Paine and confirmed in them by Mr. Winterbottom's 'History of the

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

United States of North America,' a work which was published in numbers and generally read by the members."<sup>13</sup>

At this period Hardy became acquainted with Horne-Tooke, the leader of the earlier democratic movement, and also with Paine, about whom he wrote, "a man whose political writings, especially his celebrated, 'Rights of Man,' seemed to electrify the nation, and terrified the imbecile government of the day into the most despicable and unjustifiable measures."<sup>14</sup>

The extent to which the ideas of Paine had been accepted by the members of the London Corresponding Society was very evident from many of the documents published later, and there is no question they formed the underlying basis of their propaganda; but they were ever careful to veil their more radical ideas under the forms of parliamentary reform and to refrain from any acts which would lay themselves open to prosecution.

It was significant of the attitude of the society that every member on joining it was presented with a copy of the Duke of Richmond's letter to Colonel Sharman in 1783, advocating universal suffrage.<sup>15</sup> Hardy with a shrewd instinct for gauging the political temper of the government of the day, made the arguments of the Duke of Richmond in favour of universal suffrage and democracy the basis for his movement for parliamentary reform. Hardy recognised that the earlier movement had failed because it had not been backed by the public opinion of the nation and had been confined to a liberal section of the gentlemen of England. He now proposed to enlist in the cause the working classes and the common people. Undoubtedly, in this, he was helped by the spread of radical ideas through the teachings of Paine and by the political ferment engendered by the spread of French revolutionary principles; but the driving force of the new movement was found in the principles of democracy advocated by some liberal members of the aristocracy in 1780 and by enlightened men of the middle class, like Cartwright, Horne-Tooke, Dr. Jebb, and Capel Lofft, whose principles were formulated under the excitement of the American conflict and the example of the rising democracy beyond the seas.

Hardy tells us that it was the study of "some excellent pamphlets written by Granville Sharp, Major Cartwright, Dr. Jebb, Dr. Price, Thomas Day, Rev. Mr. Stone, Capel Lofft, John Horne-Tooke, John Trenchard, Thomas Gordon, Lord Somers,

<sup>13</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 872, Vol. II, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup> Memoirs of Thomas Hardy, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 808, Vol. I, p. 9.

Duke of Richmond, and Sir William Jones" whose writings were published by the Society of Constitutional Information which convinced him that a "radical reform of Parliament was quite necessary" and led him "to form a Society of another class of the people to effect that most desirable and necessary Reform, which had baffled the united associations of men of the greatest talents, worth, and consequence in the nation."<sup>16</sup>

The London Corresponding Society came before the public on April 2, 1792, in an address to the people in which were set forth its aims and principles written by Mr. Margarot, the president. This address was sent to the Society of Constitutional Information and published by them in the newspapers and also printed on handbills and distributed by the thousand. The address began by stating that "man as an individual is entitled to liberty—it is his birthright. As a member of society, the preservation of that liberty becomes his indispensable duty: when he associated he gave up certain rights in order to secure the possession of the remainder, but he voluntarily yielded up only as much as was necessary for the common good. He still preserved a right of sharing the government of his country: without it no man can with truth call himself free. Fraud or force, sanctioned by custom withholds the right from (by far) the greater number of the inhabitants of this country. The few with whom the right of election and representation remains, abuse it, and the strong temptations held out to electors, sufficiently prove that the representatives of this country seldom procure a seat in Parliament, from the unbought suffrages of a free people. The nation, at length, perceives it, and testifies an ardent desire of remedying the evil."<sup>17</sup>

The following Resolutions were joined to this address:

1. Resolved: "That Every Individual has a right to share in the Government of that society of which he is a member, unless incapacitated.

2. "That it is no less the right than the duty of every citizen to keep a watchful eye on the government of his country; that the laws, by being multiplied, do not degenerate into oppression; and that those who are entrusted with the Government, do not substitute private interest for public advantage.

3. "That the people of Great Britain are not effectually represented in Parliament.

4. "That in consequence of a partial, unequal, and therefore

<sup>16</sup> Memoirs of Thomas Hardy, p. 103. Letter.

<sup>17</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 808. Vol. I, p. 2.

inadequate representation together with the corrupt method in which Representatives are elected, oppressive taxes, unjust laws, restrictions of liberty, and wasting of the public money, have ensued.

5 "That the only remedy for those evils is a fair, equal, and impartial representation of the people in Parliament.

6. "That a fair, equal, and impartial representation of the people in Parliament can never take place until all partial privileges are abolished.

7. "That this Society do express their abhorrence of tumult and violence and that, as they aim at reform, not anarchy, but reason, firmness, and unanimity are the only arms they themselves will employ or persuade their fellow-citizens to exert against the abuse of Power."<sup>18</sup>

In a private letter sent to each member of the society with this address, they called attention to certain "scandalous facts." Among other facts, it said, "till the reign of Henry VI, it was not necessary for the inhabitant of a County to have a freehold estate of forty shillings a year, in order to have a vote for the representative of his County. But the statute of that King passed in the year 1429 under pretence of preventing disputes at elections, most unjustly deprived a great part of the Commons of this nation of the right of consenting to those taxes, which, notwithstanding, they were compelled to pay just as if such right had not been taken from them."

The letter called attention to the fact that legislation was passed restricting a freehold or copyhold vote to an estate of £600 a year and in the time of William III, Parliament which had been elected for one year was changed to three years; and finally, in 1715, it was voted on account of the restless "parish factions" and the danger from a reaction in favour of the Stuart line being recalled by a Tory majority, that "Parliament should respectfully have continuance for seven years."

The letter pointed out that "as for the supposed representation of the people which is called the 'Commons of England in Parliament assembled': "The County of Cornwall contains in itself alone the privilege of sending forty-four members to Parliament which is just one less in number than those of the whole of the Kingdom of Scotland, containing near three million of people. Of these forty-four supposed representatives, two are elected by the freeholders of the county; the rest sit for twenty-one corporation towns." After naming these towns, it con-

<sup>18</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 808, Vol. I, p. 3.



cludes by saying that 453 electors in these twenty-one towns elect forty-two members of Parliament. "To these we might add of the same description, 28 corporations, consisting of 354 electors, which send 50 members to the House of Commons, which is so frequently and falsely called the Democracy of the Nation, while the towns of Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Wolverhampton, etc., containing above 300,000 people, have no electors or representatives whatever. Upon the whole it appears that 257 supposed representatives of the people, making a majority of the House of Commons, are returned by a number of voters not exceeding the thousandth part of the nation."<sup>19</sup>

This letter was sent out on May 24, 1792, and the facts were drawn from the report of the Friends of the People. It was no wonder that these facts served to arouse the indignation of the people and they were a potent factor in winning over many to the democratic cause.

In carrying out their plans, the London Corresponding Society rapidly extended its ramifications to many towns in England where societies with similar aims had sprung up. Their efforts were supported by the Constitutional Society which joined them in publishing and circulating Paine's new book, "Rights of Man," second part. To further these efforts, Paine, who had first published his book in an expensive edition, determined to bring out a cheap edition so that it might be within reach of the working classes. It was said that this cheap edition and the appeal to the workmen determined the government of Pitt, which had become alarmed by the republican tendencies and levelling ideas of Paine's new book, to prosecute him for seditious writings. So long as the movement of reform had been confined to the upper classes, the government paid little heed to it; but it became a different question when the appeal was made to the working classes on democratic lines.

The second part of the "Rights of Man" was a direct attack upon the English system of government as then existing, and held up the king and the aristocracy to ridicule, advocated a republican form of government, and urged the people to call a National Convention to make a Constitution. It advocated, besides, doctrines which put the poor in opposition to the rich, which tended to level classes in society. In Paine's book we have the first expression of progressive taxation, maternity benefits, old age pensions, and free education. It was not alone its political ideas which were alarming, but its social teachings.

<sup>19</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 808. Vol. I, p. 13.

Not among the least of the forces which contributed to this agitation was the Society of the Friends of the People, organised on April 11, 1792, associated for the purpose of obtaining a parliamentary reform. On the 19th, a committee was appointed to draw up a declaration of the objects of the society and an Address to the People of Great Britain; and on the 26th of April it made its report. The address was adopted and also the declaration and it was decided to print and publish the same. The declaration set forth that the "Society was instituted for the purpose of proposing to Parliament and to the Country, and of promoting, to the utmost of their power, the following Constitutional Objects, making the preservation of the Constitution, on its true principles, the foundation of all their proceedings."

First. "To restore the Freedom of Election, and a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament.

Second. "To secure to the People a more frequent Exercise of their Right of electing their Representatives." <sup>20</sup>

This declaration was signed by 101 names, 28 of whom were members of Parliament. Among the names we find many of the old leaders of the reform movement of 1780. Sheridan, John Cartwright, and those who had become associated with reform in the last few years like Charles Grey, Thomas Erskine, Philip Francis, T. B. Hollis, Samuel Whitbread, James Mackintosh, Lord John Russell, W. Henry Lambton. No one could join the society unless he signed the declaration.

The address started out by saying that "the principles of the Declaration had been avowed and supported by the highest authorities in this kingdom; by eminent individuals, and considerable bodies of men; by Locke, and Judge Blackstone; by the late Earl of Chatham, and Sir George Savile; by the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox; by petitions from several counties, and by repeated declarations from the city of London." <sup>21</sup> It advocated reform, at this time, as being best fitted to receive "temperate reflection, and prudent exertions to accomplish any necessary improvement; it is the time when practical measures for that purpose are most likely to be adopted with discretion and pursued with moderation." <sup>22</sup> This, they held, was better than times of "public complaint, or general discontent," when the reform might have been opposed on the ground that it must wait for quieter times.

<sup>20</sup> Pamphlet, "Friends of the People," p. 2. Printed, London, 1792.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Among the members of the Society of the Friends of the People were several members of the London Society of Constitutional Information who advocated annual Parliaments and universal suffrage; but the Society of the Friends of the People repudiated these ideas and refused to have any relations with any societies which went beyond anything but a vague and general declaration of electing representatives. That its principles might not be misunderstood in view of the disturbance in France, they took care to say, "The example and situation of another kingdom are held out to deter us from innovations of any kind. We say, that the Reforms we have in view are not innovations. Our intention is, not to change, but to restore; not to displace, but to reinstate the Constitution upon its true principles and original ground. In the conduct of persons most likely to reproach us with a spirit of innovation, we see a solid ground for retorting the imputation. Their professions of admiration of the beauty and of zeal for the security of the Constitution appear to us too lavish to be sincere, especially when compared with those practical violations with which they suffer this beautiful system to be invaded, and to which they never refuse to give their concurrence." <sup>23</sup>

After alluding to the statements of Blackstone and Lord Chatham on reform in 1770, they quote with approval the statement of the Duke of Richmond made in the House of Lords, January 17, 1783, when he said, "that his reasons in favour of a Parliamentary Reform were formed on the experience of twenty-six years, which, whether in or out of Government, had equally convinced him, *that the restoration of a genuine House of Commons, by a renovation of the Rights of the People, was the only remedy against that system of corruption, which had brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatened it with the loss of liberty.*" <sup>24</sup>

Fearful, however, that their movement for reform might open them to the charge of seeking to obtain a complete change in the Constitution like that in France, they denied this in the most emphatic terms: "*We deny the existence of any resemblance whatever between the cases of the two kingdoms; and we utterly disclaim the necessity of resorting to similar remedies.*" <sup>25</sup> They pointed out that the Revolution in France had arisen from the abuse of power which suffered discontent to accumulate until it

<sup>23</sup> Pamphlet, "Friends of the People," p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

broke forth in revolution. To avert these conditions from their own country was the end of reform; but they were careful to repudiate any sympathy with a "disposition to promote confusion, or even to arrive at improvement by unconstitutional and irregular courses; we hold ourselves as strictly pledged to resist that disposition, wherever it may appear, as to pursue our own objects by unexceptionable methods."<sup>26</sup> "If the spirit of the Constitution be dead in the hearts of the people no human industry can revive it. . . . Between anarchy and despotism, speaking for ourselves, we have no choice to make; we have no preference to give. We neither admit the necessity, nor can we endure the idea of resorting to either of these extremities as a refuge from the other. The course we are determined to pursue, is equally distant from both."<sup>27</sup>

At the next session of Parliament, Charles Grey was appointed to make a motion to consider parliamentary reform and Thomas Erskine to second it. In spite of the moderation of the proposals of the Friends of the People, the organisation of the society stirred up a fierce opposition in Parliament. The upper classes resented the fact that its principles and aims served to encourage the democratic spirit among the people and to lead them to take a more active interest in politics. It lent to the democratic movement the weight and influence of a section of the gentlemen of England and the endorsement of some of the ablest men in the House of Commons.

Grey made his motion in Parliament a few days later for a reform of Parliament to be introduced in the next session. In speaking for the motion he said: "It is of the utmost importance that the House should enjoy the good opinion of the public and possess their confidence as a true representation of the people." And disclaiming all connection with civil disturbances, he added, that he believed that "the evils threatening the Constitution can only be removed by a timely and temperate reform." Pitt at once replied to Grey and spoke of the danger of "anarchy and confusion worse, if possible, than despotism itself"; and in regard to reform of Parliament, he said, "I confess I am afraid, at this moment, that if agreed on by this House the security of all the blessings we enjoy will be shaken to the foundation." And turning on the Friends of the People, he exclaimed: "I have seen with concern that the gentlemen of whom I speak who are members of this House are connected with others who profess not

<sup>26</sup> Pamphlet, "Friends of the People," p. 7. London, 1792.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

Reform only but direct hostility to the very form of government. This affords suspicion that the motion for a Reform is nothing more than the preliminary to the overthrow of the whole system of government." This was an effort by Pitt to discredit Grey and his friends by allying them in the minds of men with the extremists of the Democratic party and the adherents of Paine. And from this apparent alliance, they never succeeded in entirely freeing themselves.

Fox at once arose to defend Grey, and from this time dates the split in the Whig party which was so disastrous to the cause of reform and so serious to the Democratic party; for it consolidated the greater part of the Whig party under Pitt in opposition not only to reform but to any discussions or to any meetings for improving the representation in Parliament. During the month of May, Pitt introduced his proclamation against seditious writings and invited the Duke of Portland, the leader of the Whig party, to support him. Portland hesitated to take this action, as it meant a break with Fox who had championed the cause of Grey and the Friends of the People. However, he called a meeting of the Whig leaders to consider the question; and, ultimately, Portland and his adherents, Windham, Lord Fitzwilliam, and Burke, went over to the side of Pitt and ranged themselves with the reactionary party which later carried through the severe legislation against the Reformers and Democratic societies.

Meanwhile, the Democratic societies, far from being intimidated by the proclamation against seditious writings, continued their activities and voted to raise a fund in defence of Paine. The prosecution of the government served only to increase their activities and enthusiasm. During this period, a society had been organised at Sheffield which was extending its influence in the surrounding towns and its methods of organisation were being adopted by other societies.

The aim of the society was "that the public mind and general sentiments of the people are determined to obtain a radical reform of the country, as soon as prudence and discretion will permit, it believes it their duty to make use of every prudent means, as far as their abilities can be extended, to obtain so salutary and desirable an object, as a thorough reformation of our country, established upon that system which is consistent with the Rights of Man."<sup>28</sup>

How far Paine's ideas had been accepted by the societies is

<sup>28</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke, Vol. II, p. 244.

seen by the action of the Manchester Constitutional Society which passed a vote of thanks to Thomas Paine for his second part, "Rights of Man," "a work of the highest importance to every nation under heaven, particularly to this, as containing excellent and practicable plans for an immediate and considerable reduction of the public expenditure; for the prevention of wars; for the extension of our manufactures and commerce; for the education of the young; for the comfortable support of the aged; for the better maintenance of the poor of every description, and finally, for lessening greatly, and without delay, the enormous load of taxes under which this country at present labours." <sup>29</sup>

The society was careful not to endorse Paine's republican ideas or to advocate any principles tending to the overthrow of monarchy.

The society at Norwich went even further in commending the "Rights of Man," first and second parts, and congratulated "our brethren on the progress of political knowledge, and earnestly entreated them to increase their associations, in order to form one grand and extensive union of all the friends of general liberty. And we hope the time is not far distant when the people of England will be equally and faithfully represented in Parliament." <sup>30</sup>

This is the first intimation of the suggestion of a general convention of all the societies, which was to be taken up and advocated in the ensuing year.

The growth and activities of the societies, the spread of French ideas, and above all the circulation of the "Rights of Man" by Paine, alarmed the governing classes and created a fear not alone of reform, but of social revolution. Windham expresses this fear and the general feeling of the property classes in writing concerning Grey's motion for reform in the House of Commons. In May 1792, he says: "Does he suppose for instance that, by any plan which he will recommend, he will satisfy those who say that every Government is an usurpation upon the rights of man, in which every individual has not a vote? We must not shut our eyes to the fact that there is at this time a spirit very generally diffused, as it has been very wickedly excited, of changing the present constitution of things without any distinct view of what is to be substituted in its room. The promoters of this spirit call the means which they apply, an appeal to reason. But to whose reason do they appeal? To the reason of the very lower orders

<sup>29</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke, Vol. II, p. 245.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256

of the community, whom it is easy to make discontented, as their situation must ever render them too apt to be, but whom no man, not meaning to betray them, would ever erect into judges of the first moral principle of Government, or of the advantages or disadvantages of great political measures.

"It will be well worth while of people, not indifferent to their own interests, whatever experiments they may wish to make, with those of other people, to consider, whether this practice of teaching all the world to submit to nothing but what their reason can satisfy them of the truth of, may not proceed in time to lengths which they will not much like; and whether they do not conceive, that upon this doctrine of universal right arguments might be brought, such at least as an audience of labouring men may think satisfactory, why there should not be an equality of property as well as an equality of voting. Hints of this sort have already been thrown out, I think, in Mr. Payne's pamphlet. I am sure it would not be difficult to improve them in a way to make them circulate among the lower people, as rapidly as arguments about the principles of government are said now to do among the workmen at Sheffield. They have already abolished in France all titles and distinctions, a species of property surely as innocent as any that can be conceived, and which, on being given to one man, does not seem to take away from another. They have abolished likewise in great measure the right of persons to dispose of their property by will. What are all the laws of property but the mere creatures of arbitrary appointment? And who shall be able to derive any one of them by a regular deduction from natural rights, or at least, as not to admit endless disputes about the authenticity of the pedigree? Suppose some one should take it into their head to write a work addressed to the labouring people, exposing to them the iniquity of that system which condemns half the world to labour for the other, and pleading for such a partition of goods as may give to every one a competence and leave to none a superfluity. I am certainly not meaning to say that such arguments would be good ones; I am not meaning to say, that they might not be easily answered, but I should be sorry to undertake to answer them in an auditory such as composes the majority of every parish in England. For some time the habitual respect which the laws have taught for property would perhaps prevail; but when you have once well taught men to consider the power from which such laws proceed, as an usurpation, how much longer will the respect remain for regulations, unfavourable to their interests, which that power has

ordained? How long will men acquiesce in laws, which condemn them to poverty, when they are to be maintained on no other ground than such an agreement, as they can discern in them, with natural rights? Why publications of this sort should not be put forth, I don't see. You cannot punish them on any principles which permit the publication of many works now circulating; and you cannot dispute the competency of the common people to judge of the question of property, when you allow them to be judges of what are certainly not less difficult, the first principles of Government."<sup>31</sup>

This was a clear statement by a man who stood high in the councils of the Whig party and who was moving with the tide of reaction caused by the political agitation of the time; and he was alarmed by such writings as Paine's which, though written in defence of the French Revolution, advocated principles which seemed to him, not only to undermine the Constitution, but also to tend to the overthrow of society. Nor were these fears groundless or merely the result of panic. The degradation of the masses of the people and the discontent of the labouring classes were just grounds for alarm. It is clear that Windham discerned ahead the spectre of social revolution which, even then, had begun to be manifested in the teachings of the French Jacobins.

It was the sense that property was being attacked that accounts for the overwhelming majority in the House of Commons supporting Pitt and the rallying around him of the Whig lords and leaders, when he introduced the proclamation against seditious writings in May 1792, which aimed at the prosecution of Paine for his book on the "Rights of Man." Fox and Grey would have quieted this popular agitation and ferment by a wise measure of parliamentary reform; and in their estimate of the temper of the English people at that time and of the conservative spirit of the labouring classes, they were right and Pitt was wrong. Repressive measures stimulated, rather than allayed, the discontent of the working classes. But at a time of economic changes induced by the Industrial Revolution, the prosecutions spread the seeds of radical ideas which blossomed later in the Chartist movement. It is true, however, that Windham clearly foresaw the social and economic changes which underlay the democratic movement which later developed in the 19th century, and have been realised in their fulness only in our own time. It is this fact which justifies the opposition of Pitt and his adherents who

<sup>31</sup> Lord Rosebery, "Windham Papers," Vol I, p. 102.



believed that the government could best be administered by the upper classes.

While Fox and Grey had no sympathy with the ideas of Paine, they felt that the measures advocated by the government were too severe, and not warranted by the political agitation of the time. Besides, they looked with favour upon the French Revolution as expressing the principles of popular government. At this time Louis XVI was still on the throne and the insurrection of the 10th of August had not yet taken place. Even after this event, when the king was dethroned and the republic established, they had no sympathy with the crusade against the republic by the Powers of Europe and held consistently to their liberal principles and the need of reform in Parliament.

But it was evident that the democratic societies were determined to demand much more in the way of reform than Grey and the Friends of the People advocated. The publication of the "Rights of Man," second part, had exerted a great influence. The circulation of the works, since they had been put into a cheap edition, had been enormous. More than 200,000 copies had been sold. And the resolutions passed by the societies revealed that they had adopted the principles and incorporated the ideas in part of their programmes of reform. While the societies were careful to keep within the legal limits of the law and spoke in public only of parliamentary reform and universal suffrage, yet their idea of calling a National Convention to make a Constitution would undoubtedly have led in the end to many measures for the social amelioration of the working classes. Their enthusiasm for the French Republic and their messages to the French Convention, certainly justified the French in thinking that a revolution was impending in England.

From this period until the state trials in November 1794, the societies tended more and more to the acceptance of radical doctrines and enlisted the sympathies of the poor by their attacks upon property and the privileges of the ruling classes.

The Democratic societies were not dismayed by the prosecution of Paine. Indeed, they met this action of the government by raising subscriptions for his defence and renewed their activity in circulating his books. The political agitation continued to increase, and in August 1792, the London Corresponding Society issued an appeal to the inhabitants of Great Britain in which they revealed their inner aims and purposes. This appeal to the British nation was issued on August 16, 1792, and as it reveals not

only the aims and objects of the society, but also the state of public opinion among the working classes, it is of vital importance to a true understanding of the democratic movement.

Its opening sentences at once strike at the heart of the social movement which underlay the demand for reform.

"Of every rank and of every situation in life, rich, poor, high or low, we address you all, as our brethren, on a subject of the highest importance and most intimately connected with the welfare of every individual who deems liberty a blessing, who partakes in the prosperity of his country, and who wishes to transmit as much of either as he possibly can to posterity.

"Uninfluenced by party pique or selfish motives, no ways affrighted at the threats of power, not in the least awed by the evidently hostile preparations of a much alarmed aristocracy, we, the London Corresponding Society, united with a view of obtaining a thorough Parliamentary Reform, anxiously demand your serious and most collected attention to the present vitiated state of the British Government; we entreat you to examine wholly and impartially the numerous abuses that prevail therein, their destructive consequences on the poor, and their evil tendency on all; as also the rapidity with which these abuses increase both in number and in magnitude.

"We next submit to your examination an effectual mode of putting a stop to them, and of thereby restoring to our no less boasted than impaired Constitution its pristine vigour and purity, and we thereto solicit the junction of your efforts with ours.

"This great end, however, we believe attainable, solely by the whole nation, deeply impressed with a sense of its wrongs, uniting, as it were with one voice, demanding of those to whom, for a while, it has entrusted its Sovereignty, a restoration of, annually elected Parliaments, unbiassed and unbought elections, and an equal representation of the whole body of the people. Leaving to the enemies of freedom all violent, tumultuous and unconstitutional proceedings, we invite you to peaceful, neighbourly, and well-regulated meetings.

"Laying aside all pretensions to originality, we claim no other merit than the reconsidering and verifying what has already been urged in our common cause by the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, and their, then, honest party, years back; now, differing from them, we support with candour and zeal (thereby proving ourselves no courtiers) the banner of truth, already displayed, against the oppressors of mankind, and we take pride in acknowledging ourselves part of that useful class of citizens which place-

men pensioned with the extorted produce of our daily labour, and a proud nobility wallowing in riches (acquired somehow) affect to treat with a contempt too degrading for human nature to bear, unless reconciled to it by the reflection, that though their inferiors in rank and fortune, we equal them in talents and excel them in honesty.

"Still, friends and fellow-citizens, possessed of souls far superior to the evil spirit influencing those oppressors, these debasers of mankind, instead of hating we condemn them, and our motive is not vengeance, but redress.

"A Constitution we are said to possess we are willing to believe it—if good, it allows redress to a complaining people; if excellent, as many assert, it must naturally point out all the means thereof. Let it, therefore, be publicly and carefully examined; if it is really what it ought to be, it cannot be too well known; if faulty, it cannot be too soon amended, nor can that be done by a more competent Judge than the thus collected sense of the whole nation.

"It is the right of every individual to be well acquainted with the laws that bind him; but how is the peasant, the meehanic, the manufacturer to obtain the necessary knowledge; his time fully employed in labouring hard to provide a scanty meal for his family, and in earning wherewith to satisfy the frequent and peremptory demands of surly tax-gatherers, he has no leisure for such intricate, political researches. . . . Such being the forlorn situation of three-fourths of the nation, how are Britons to obtain information and redress? Will the Court, will the Ministry afford either? Will Parliament grant them? Will the nobles or the clergy ease the people's sufferings? No! Experience tells us and proclamations confirm it that the interest and the contention of power are combined to keep the nation in torpid ignorance.

"The only resource, then, friends and fellow-citizens, will be found in those societies, which, instituted with a view to the public good, promote a general instruction of our rights as men, expose the abuses of those in power, and point out the only Constitutional, the only effectual means of forwarding a public investigation and obtaining a complete redress for a people, in whose credulous good nature originated their present difficulties.

"Let no man imagine himself unconcerned in the proposed reform; let no one think so meanly of himself or his abilities as to suppose his coming forward will be of no service to the cause of liberty. Numbers, union, and perseverance must in the end be

crowned with success. While compared with small efforts of each individual associating and thereby countenancing the demand of the nation to be restored to its constitutional rights, how great will appear the advantages resulting therefrom,—

“An honest Parliament.

“An annual Parliament.

“A Parliament wherein each individual will have his representative.

“Soon, then, should we see our liberties restored; the press free, the law simplified, Judges unbiassed, Juries independent, and needless places and pensions retrenched, immoderate salaries reduced, the public better served, taxes diminished, and the necessities of life more within the reach of the poor, youth better educated, prisons less crowded, old age better provided for, and sumptuous feasts at the expense of the poor, less frequent.”

After dilating upon the advantages of such a Parliament elected by the people in avoiding the waste of public funds, the passing of unjust laws, and providing places, pensions, and contracts for the favourites of the government, the Address closes with these words:\*

“Therefore, Britons, friends and fellow-citizens, with hand and heart unite, claim what is your right, persevere and be free; for who shall dare to withstand our just demands. Oppression, already trembling at the voice of individuals, will shrink away and disappear forever, when the nation united shall assert its privileges and demand their restoration.”<sup>32</sup>

In all this, under the ægis of the plan of reform of the Duke of Richmond, we see the effects of Paine's teaching and the demand for the realisation of his social programme and legislation in the interest of the poor. That such a programme should alarm the upper classes is not surprising. In spite of the protests of moderate reformers against what they called the extremists, all efforts at the extension of the suffrage were met with the counter-cry that it contained the germs of social revolution. In view of what was happening in France, this alarm seemed justified. The spectre of the coming democracy foreshadowed changes in the social life of the people. However much the reformers might try to dispel the illusion and say that all that was demanded to quiet the people was a reform in representation, the fact remains that when democracy had once triumphed, it would proceed to legislate along social lines and in the interest of the poor.

<sup>32</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 808, Vol. I. Trial of Thomas Hardy, Vol. I, pp. 495-500.

While the London Corresponding Society was careful to keep its public programme within the limits of parliamentary reform, it spoke the language of social reform. In October 1792, after the establishment of the French Republic and the defeat of the armies of the Duke of Brunswick at Valmy, it sent an address to the National Convention of France in which it said:

"Frenchmen, you are already free, and Britons are preparing to become so. Casting far from us the criminal prejudices artfully inculcated by evil-minded men and wily courtiers, we, instead of natural enemies, at length discover in Frenchmen our fellow-citizens of the world, and our brethren by the same Heavenly Father, who created us for the purpose of loving and mutually assisting each other, but not to hate, and to be ever ready to cut each other's throats at the command of weak and ambitious Kings and corrupt ministers:—seeking our real enemies, we find them in our bosoms, we feel ourselves inwardly torn by, and ever the victims of a restless and all consuming aristocracy, hitherto the bane of every nation under the sun. Wisely have you acted in expelling it from France.

"While you enjoy the envied glory of being the unaided defenders of freedom, we fondly anticipate, in idea, the numerous blessings mankind will enjoy. If you succeed, we ardently wish, the triple alliance (not of crowns but), of the people of America, France, and Britain, will give freedom to Europe, and peace to the whole world. Dear friends, you combat for the advantage of the human race—how well purchased will be, though at the expense of much blood, the glorious unprecedented privilege of saying, mankind is free,—tyrants and tyranny are no more—peace reigns on the earth, and this is the work of Frenchmen."<sup>33</sup>

Nor was the Society of Constitutional Information of London, in which Major Cartwright and Horne-Tooke were the leading spirits, far behind the Corresponding Society. They, too, addressed the National Convention in glowing terms of eulogy and intimated that they spoke the sentiments of the large majority of the English nation. They closed their address in these words:

"The sparks of liberty preserved in England for ages, like the coruscations of the northern Aurora, served but to show the darkness visible in the rest of Europe. The lustre of the American Republic, like an effulgent morning, arose with increasing vigour, but still too distant to enlighten our hemisphere, till the splendour of the French Revolution burst forth upon the nations in the full

<sup>33</sup> Trial of Thomas Hardy, Vol. I, pp. 161, 162.

fervour of a meridian sun, and displayed, in the midst of the European world, the practical result of principles, which philosophy had sought in the shade of speculation, and which experience must everywhere confirm. It dispels the clouds of prejudice from all people, reveals the secrets of all despotism, and creates a new character in man. In this career of improvement your example will soon be followed; for nations, rising from their lethargy, will reclaim the rights of Man with a voice which man cannot resist." <sup>34</sup>

The zeal of the Democratic societies in sending addresses and emissaries to the National Convention had alarmed the upper classes. The societies had created the impression that they were seeking to imitate the French and were inclining to republican principles. This impression produced a panic in the country and led to the organisation of loyalist associations to counter-act these principles. The Reeves' Associations for the Preservation of Liberty and Property, which sprang up all over England and Scotland, passed hundreds of loyal resolutions at public meetings and sent them up to Parliament. Pressure was brought to bear on all sides against those who held democratic opinions. Shopkeepers were intimidated; inn-keepers were refused licenses, if they opened their doors for democratic meetings and were warned not to take any newspapers of a seditious character. In the theatres there were demonstrations of loyalty with cries of "God save the King," and democrats were everywhere hustled and put out of doors and in some cases were subjected to violence. <sup>35</sup>

Fox denounced the activities of these associations and called attention to their methods in the House of Commons. "The new associations have acted without disguise. One of them, the association for preserving liberty and property against republicans and levellers, I must applaud for the sincerity of its practice. Mr. Chairman Reeves says that they will not only prosecute, but they will convince men, and they recommend among other publications, a hand-bill, entitled, 'One pennyworth of truth from Thomas Bull to his brother John,' in which among other odd things, it is said, 'Have you not read the Bible? Do you not know that it is there written, that Kings are the Lord's anointed?' But who ever heard of an anointed republic? Such is the manner in which these associations are to 'convince the minds of men.' No, thank God, the people of this country have a better ground of loyalty to the House of Brunswick than that of

<sup>34</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke. Vol. II, p. 299.

<sup>35</sup> Trevelyan, "Lord Grey of the Reform Bill," p. 62.

divine right, namely, that they are the sovereigns of their own election." <sup>36</sup>

But in spite of Fox's denunciation, the associations continued to flourish and their policy of intimidation had its effect upon the more timid advocates of reform. Many of them became lukewarm in their attachment to reform and doubted whether it was wise to bring forward the question at all. The attitude of the extremists among the democrats had alienated many of the Friends of the People and they urged Grey to side-track his motion for reform which was to be brought forward in the next session of Parliament. In October 1792, Tiernay, who was preparing the report on reform for the Friends of the People, wrote to Grey on the discouraging outlook for reform due to the division of society into the two extremes of loyalists and democrats.

"As one of the Friends of the People, I must continue to be anxious for a Cabinet consultation somewhere. We do not seem to be aware of the very critical situation in which we stand. The late events in France are to us most important, and much may depend on the use we make of them. As far as I can see, they have made one party here desperate and the other drunk. Many are become wild Republicans who a few months back were moderate Reformers, and numbers who six weeks ago were contented with plain, old-fashioned Toryism, have now worked themselves up into such apprehensions for the fate of Royalty as to be incapable of distinguishing between Reform and treason, and to threaten death and destruction to all who differ from them. In this extravagant ferment of men's opinions our task becomes every day more difficult. The Leveller and Reformer, the King and the Tyrant, seem in the new vocabularies of Courtiers and Patriots to be confounded and considered as synonymous, and I much fear we shall neither gain proselytes from amongst those who seem attached to the very defects of the Constitution, or those who seek to overturn it altogether." <sup>37</sup>

That Tiernay had not overdrawn the state of public feeling at the time is clear from the actions and utterances of many of the Democratic societies. The foolish remark of the representative of the London Corresponding Society to the National Convention, "that it would not be extraordinary if in much less space of time than can be imagined the French should send addresses of congratulation to a National Convention of England," had served to inflame the minds of men and to fill them with fear of a coming

<sup>36</sup> Cobbett's "Parliamentary History." Vol. XXX, p. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Trevelyan, "Lord Grey of the Reform Bill," p. 60.

revolution in England. The alarm and panic of the Tory and Loyalist party continued to increase and all local disturbances between the Reeves' Associations supported by the mob and the democrats were magnified into actions which foreshadowed an insurrection. In Scotland, during the last months of 1792, there had been a very rapid growth of Democratic societies which had been born under the impulse of Paine's "Rights of Man" and the sufferings of the working classes due to the dearness of food and unemployment. Societies had been established in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee, and in many other towns. Most of these organisations had been formed with the idea of reform in the representation. They were led by the educated men of the middle class who held a meeting at Glasgow on October 3, 1792, of the "Associated Friends of the Constitution and of the People" which passed resolutions in favour of equal representation, shorter Parliaments, and co-operation with the Friends of the People in London.

But there were many among the working classes who went much farther in their demands and were infected with the radical doctrines of Paine. Dundas, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, stated in Parliament in December that, "In Scotland, more particularly, a spirit of turbulence had appeared in several places. Mobs had taken place at Dundee, Perth, and Aberdeen. At Dundee the pretext of the disturbance, in its commencement, was stated to be some discontent with respect to meal; but it was not long before shouts of liberty and equality were heard from every quarter of the mob assembled upon the occasion. Some even called out, 'No excise. No King,' and they concluded with planting a tree of liberty."<sup>38</sup>

The government of Pitt, taking advantage of the general alarm, issued a proclamation on December 1, 1792, to call out the militia and to summons Parliament on the ground that "a spirit of tumult and disorder," incited by persons in league with foreigners, had lately shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection. Undoubtedly there had been disturbances in many cities of the kingdom, as in Manchester, Birmingham, Cambridge, and Dundee, due to royalist mobs who were attacking dissenters and democrats; but there were no such disturbances as to justify the charge of insurrection. It was evident at the assembling of Parliament on December 13, 1792, and the discussions which ensued, that panic among the property classes had magnified the speculations of the democrats into a scheme for the overthrow of

<sup>38</sup> Cobbett's Parliamentary History, Vol. XXX, p. 48.



the government. To be sure there had been, no doubt, considerable wild talk, and a small minority of the democrats had spoken of a new social order in their enthusiasm for French principles, but there had not been enough disturbance to justify the issue of a proclamation of Parliament. Fox was furious when he heard of the proclamation and wrote to the Duke of Portland a letter in which he charged Pitt with a scheme to break up the Whig party.

When the House of Commons met on December the 13th, Fox attacked the government fiercely and charged it with raising a spectre of insurrection, when there was no evidence of it in the country. Taking up the statement of the king's speech which said, "On various pretexts there have been tumults and disorders, but the true design was the destruction of our constitution," and the comment on this of the Lord Mayor of London, "There have been various societies established in the city of London, instituted for the plausible purpose of merely discussing constitutional questions but which were really designed to propagate seditious doctrines," Fox replied that such a method of judging men, not by their "overt acts" but by their secret thoughts, was to establish a new "scheme of tyranny," and that to condemn men for their speculative opinions would lead to the "extinction of the liberties of the people." Acknowledging that certain pamphlets were in circulation which contained doctrines tending to subvert our establishments, "there was nothing unlawful in this," and he charged the government with instituting proceedings which attacked the rights of the people and "setting up this bugbear," it spread "panic for the very purpose of sanctifying this infringement, while again the very infringement engenders the evil which you dread. One extreme naturally leads to another. Those who dread republicanism, fly for shelter to the Crown. Those who desire reform and are calumniated, are driven by despair to republicanism. And this is the evil that I dread."<sup>39</sup>

But it was evident from the debates that what the government and its supporters dreaded was not merely republicanism, but republicanism as seen in the French model and the levelling doctrines which were associated with it. Windham held that it was not by their motives that they judged the democrats, "for it was well known they did intend what they did not profess, and this was demonstrable by their actions. If they were asked if they were friends to our government, they answered, yes. But they wanted no King, they wanted no Lords. All they wanted was a perfect representation of the people. Such a constitution would

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

no more be the constitution of England than the constitution of Venice; in short, their view was to destroy all hereditary right, and perhaps after to attempt an equalisation of property; for one of their books stated, that 'a country could not be truly free, where there was so much inequality among its members.'"<sup>40</sup>

Grey ridiculed the idea that the people were carried away by seditious doctrines, and said that though he was no friend of Paine's doctrines, he considered the "rights of man as the foundation of every government, and those who stood out against those rights as conspirators against the people." He claimed that Englishmen prized their constitution, but if it "was abused, the effect must infallibly be to inflame men's minds, and ministers alone would be responsible for the consequences which might ensue."<sup>41</sup>

Mr. Secretary Dundas pointed out that it was not reform that the people wanted, but an idea of liberty and equality unknown to the constitution which taught them to aspire to an equal share in the legislation of the government "upon the principle that one man was as good as another, and that there ought to be no distinctions of claims since the rights of all were founded upon the same basis. That their views went even further than this: that they proposed to invade the rights of property, and establish an equal division of possessions among all the members of the community. An Agrarian law was very familiarly talked of among the common people."<sup>42</sup>

However much injustice these views of the supporters of the government might do to the true aims of the Democratic societies, yet they expressed the common opinion of their ultimate aims and the dread which the dissemination of French principles had excited among the governing classes. The government carried its measures in the House of Commons with an overwhelming majority and war ensued with France in the following month. The effect was at once felt in the decline in membership of the Democratic societies and a quieting down of some of their activities. Nevertheless, they continued their agitation for reform and centred their hopes about the proposal for reform which Grey had promised to introduce in Parliament. All the societies united in sending up to Parliament petitions so as to bring the pressure of public opinion to bear upon the House. The London Corresponding Society sent one with 1,300 names, and thirty

<sup>40</sup> Cobbett's Parliamentary History, Vol. XXX, p. 39.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

other petitions were sent up from Sheffield, Nottingham, Westminster, Edinburgh, Dundee, fifteen of which came from cities and towns of Scotland. The petition from Sheffield was rejected as being disrespectful to the House, in stating that the Commons of Great Britain "did not represent the majority of the people" and that "they are not the real, fair, and independent representatives of the whole people of Great Britain." The Norwich petition was also rejected, though it contained 3,700 names, as it was printed. It was against an old established rule of the House of Commons to receive printed petitions. Most of the petitions demanded universal suffrage.

Grey presented the petition of the Friends of the People<sup>2</sup> which advocated parliamentary reform on the following grounds: First, That the number of representatives is grossly disproportioned to their comparative extent, population, and trade. And in substantiation of this, it cited that Cornwall alone had more representatives than Rutland, Yorkshire, and Middlesex. Secondly, That the elective franchise is distributed in unequal proportions. In supporting this, it affirmed that "70 members are elected by boroughs having only a very few electors; that 90 are elected by 46 places in none of which the number of voters exceeds fifty"; that 37 members are elected by 19 places under a hundred voters each; 52 members by 26 places in which the voters do not exceed two hundred voters; 20 members are returned from Scotland by less than one hundred electors each and ten members for counties by less than 250 each. "And in this manner, according to the present state of the representation, 294 members are chosen, and, being a majority of the entire House of Commons, are enabled to decide all questions in the name of the whole people of England and Scotland."<sup>43</sup> Thirdly, That the right of voting is regulated by no uniform or rational principle; that men are disfranchised for religious opinions and there is no proper basis of the franchise based upon taxation. Fourthly, That the duration of Parliament for seven years rather than for three is against the control of Parliament by the people.

These abuses have made an election to Parliament depend upon the patronage of special individuals. For instance, "that 84 individuals do, by their own immediate authority, send 157 members to Parliament. Your petitioners are convinced that in addition to the 157 members mentioned above 150 more, making in the whole, 307, are returned to your House, not by the collected voice of those whom they appear to represent, but by the recom-

mendation of seventy powerful individuals, added to the 84 before mentioned, and making the total number of patrons altogether only 154, who return a decided majority of your House." <sup>44</sup>

Grey introduced this petition on the 6th of May, 1793, and in supporting it, he said: "I do not approve of the Duke of Richmond's plan of Reform, though I think it better than the present system; any plan would be better which would secure the sending of such members to the House, as would vote independently. I could certainly mention a plan which appears to me much better." <sup>45</sup> But he refrained from proposing any plan and moved for the appointment of a committee to take into consideration the petition.

The debate of reform lasted for two days in which many members took part until the issues involved were thrashed out. The main argument against reform was that the time was inopportune and that it would tend to the subversion of the Constitution.

Windham opposed reform as being repugnant to reason and common sense. He stated that it was based upon two pernicious principles—the principle of right and the principle that the will of the majority should govern. Then he launched off into a tirade against the principles as exemplified in the French Revolution. Lord Mornington argued that the petition of the Friends of the People did not represent the desires of the great number of the petitions which asked for universal suffrage on the basis of the rights of man. He cited the petitions from Sheffield, Derby, and Westminster and charged that the London Corresponding Society was working not for reform, but for the subversion of the Constitution; that Thomas Hardy had sent an address to the National Convention in November, "which breathed so sincere an affection for the cause of the French Republic and so warm a zeal for the destruction of the British Government" that it was printed and circulated throughout the departments. He charged that the society had encouraged a petition "for a radical reform in the House of Commons," but the object of the petition was "not a change in the representation," but only a means of affording an opportunity for the "total subversion of the monarchy itself." <sup>46</sup>

And he contended that "the plan of universal suffrage, con-

<sup>44</sup> Cobbett's Parliamentary History, Vol. XXX, p. 795.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 808.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 864-5.

nected with the principles of the French Revolution, was that which was most likely to be substituted in place of the present system of representation." <sup>47</sup>

Pitt was opposed to considering reform on the ground that it would afford an opening "to wicked persons to subvert that very constitution which we were desirous to improve." He stated that the Democratic societies had been formed under the influence of French principles; "That to adopt the system now proposed, is to adopt the principles of the French code, and follow the example of their legislators. The same principle which claims individual suffrage, and affirms that every man has an equal right to a share in the representation, is that which serves as a basis of that declaration of rights on which the French legislators have founded their government." <sup>48</sup>

There can be no doubt that Pitt and his supporters were thoroughly alarmed by the spread of French principles in England and they shared this dread with the great majority of their countrymen. The writings and actions of the Democratic societies, though only a small minority, led the government to take a distorted view of the whole situation and to bring forward repressive measures which imperilled the liberties of England.

Fox closed the debate, and, replying to Pitt, charged him with inconsistency in opposing a plan of reform now which he had supported in the eighties. "When he brought forward his plan of reform, he was acting at all points with the Duke of Richmond, the great apostle of universal suffrage." "And it was no very unreasonable supposition, that his first motion on the subject of reform might have been concerted with his Grace at the Richmond-house. If, then, men's intentions were to be canvassed by supposed privy to the designs of others, the privy of the right Hon. gentleman to the Duke of Richmond's system of universal suffrage could not be denied, and he must be pronounced guilty by his own rule." <sup>49</sup>

Fox said that he had always disliked universal suffrage, but it was unfair to charge it with all the evils of France; for the Constituent and Legislative Assemblies had been elected on a small property suffrage. Referring to the defects of Parliament as shown by its actions in the American war, he contended that the true remedy for all discontent and disorder was representation and "he was ready to say with Locke, 'that government originated

<sup>47</sup> Cobbett's Parliamentary History, Vol. XXX, p. 870.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 900.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 910.

not only for, but from the people, and that the people were the legitimate sovereign in every community.' " <sup>50</sup>

But such an appeal made no impression upon a House of Commons which was blinded by its fears of French principles and its dread that the agitation of reform would serve only to awaken forces, which, once roused, would end by overturning the Constitution. The motion to consider reform was rejected by 282 votes to 41.

Thus ended the memorable debate on the question of reform which was not again to stir Parliament to the same extent until the question came up for a settlement in the Reform Bill of 1832, though it was raised again by Grey in his Reform Bill of 1797. But the effects of this debate and the decision against reform were far-reaching. In this struggle with the democrats, the government was forced step by step into repressive measures which finally destroyed all liberty of speech, freedom of petition, and established a veritable reign of terror.

<sup>50</sup>Cobbett's Parliamentary History, Vol. XXX, p. 922.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPRESSION OF DEMOCRACY: REIGN OF TERROR

THE debate on the Reform Bill in the House of Commons had revealed the attitude of Pitt and the government towards the democratic movement. Pitt had treated the petitions for universal suffrage with scorn and characterised them as the result of the spread of French principles in Great Britain. He went so far as to say: "If this principle of individual suffrage be granted, and be carried to its utmost extent, it goes to subvert the peerage, to depose the King, and, in fine, to extinguish every hereditary distinction, and every privileged order, and to establish that system of equalising anarchy announced in the code of French legislation, and attested in the blood of the massacres at Paris."<sup>1</sup>

That a statesman of the standing of Pitt should have lent himself to make such a statement in spite of all his experience in the reform movement in 1782 and his association with the Duke of Richmond, who advocated universal suffrage at that time, shows how the French Revolution had blinded him and his party to all sense of justice and right. Under these convictions it was not surprising that the government began to inaugurate those measures of repression which culminated in the state trials of the next year. That these trials took place was owing, in some measure, to the insistent demand of the democratic societies for reform based upon universal suffrage, and also, in a larger degree, to the panic caused by the actions and principles of the French democracy and by the fear that the Democratic societies in England would inaugurate a movement which would overturn the Constitution.

The new policy of the government was not long in making itself felt. Indeed, the policy of repression had been determined in the preceding December when Dundas, the Lord Advocate of Scotland, had decided to arrest Muir, one of the leaders in the Convention of the Friends of the People, which had held a meeting in Edinburgh on December 11, 1792. Thomas Muir was a

<sup>1</sup> Pitt's Speeches, Vol. I, p. 448.

young lawyer of Glasgow who had enlisted in the democratic movement of Scotland and had been active in organising societies of the Friends of the People in many towns and villages. He had endeavoured to enlighten the lower classes, the weavers of the towns, in their rights, and urged them to join in the movement to secure annual Parliaments and an equal representation in Parliament. He was one of the leading figures in the Convention of the Friends of the People, held in Edinburgh, and at this meeting he was imprudent enough to read an "Address from the Society of United Irishmen" against which some of the delegates protested. He also had addressed a meeting at Kirkintilloch in November at which he was charged with uttering many seditious doctrines. He was also charged with distributing and circulating the works of Thomas Paine, the "Declaration of Rights," approved of by a number of the Friends of reform in Paisley, a paper entitled, "A Dialogue betwixt the Governors and the Governed," and a democratic sheet, "The Patriot."<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime Muir went up to London and met some of the members of the Friends of the People and Mr. Grey. It was suggested that Muir go to Paris and use his "influence with the leading people, in mitigating the fate of the King." His efforts in this direction were without effect, and he wrote to William Skirving that "he would return as soon as his friends should be of the opinion his presence was necessary in Scotland." Owing to the difficulties in obtaining passports from the French Government and the state of war which existed between England and France at this time, he was much delayed; but finally he obtained passage in a ship going to America by way of Belfast, where he disembarked at the end of May 1793. Returning later to Portpatrick, Scotland, he was recognised by the custom-house officer and brought before the magistrate, Mr. Ross, and sent up to Edinburgh to stand his trial for sedition in August 1793. This trial created great public interest; for it was the first trial of this character that had taken place in Scotland in many years.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, Muir was tried before a judge who by his prejudices and arbitrary methods in court was unfit for his position, and, in the selection of the jury and the admission of evidence, violated many fundamental principles of the law. For instance, the jurors were taken from an Association "which assembled in Goldsmith's Hall, calling themselves the Friends of

<sup>2</sup> "Trial of Thomas Muir," p. 8. Edinburgh, 1794.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75-78.



the Constitution, united to support it against Republicans and Levellers, and expressing their zeal to suppress tumult and sedition."<sup>4</sup> They had openly expressed their opposition to the association of the Friends of the People to which Muir belonged. Muir objected to these men being called to the jury as being openly hostile to his opinions; but was overruled by the judge.

The trial was marked by unfairness and many irregularities in the admission of evidence. In spite of this, Muir conducted his own defence and made such a strong plea for his innocence of the charges of sedition, that the audience in the court-room broke into applause at the close of the address, which shocked and irritated the judges on the bench. In the course of his remarks, Muir contended that he was not tried for sedition; "I know for what I am brought to this bar, it is for having strenuously and actively engaged in the cause of Parliamentary Reform; for having exerted every effort, by constitutional measures, to procure an equal representation of the people in the House of the People," "Yes, I plead guilty, I openly, actively, and sincerely embarked in the cause of Parliamentary Reform, in the vindication and in the restoration of the rights of the people."<sup>5</sup>

He justified his conduct by appealing to the attitude of Pitt and the Duke of Richmond in the reform movement in 1782. "Can it ever be forgotten," he says, "that in 1782, Mr. Pitt was stained with the same guilt? Did not he preach the necessity of a reform in the representation of the people? Did not he advise the people to form societies . . . by his presence? I appeal to the resolutions which he subscribed, in the Thatched House Tavern. I attest the motions which he made for reform, in the House of Commons. Beware how you condemn me."<sup>6</sup> And then he continued, "But if the attempt to procure a reform in Parliament be criminal, your accusation must extend far and wide. It must implicate the Ministers of the Crown and the lowest subjects. Have you forgotten that, in the year 1782, the Duke of Richmond, the present commander of the forces, was a flaming advocate for the universal formation of such societies all over the kingdom? Have you never read his famous letter to Colonel Sharwin, in which his principles, his testimony, to a full and complete representation of the people, are indelibly recorded? . . . Shall what was patriotism in 1782 be

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

criminal in 1793? You have honoured me this night, by the title of the pest of Scotland."<sup>7</sup>

Evidence against Muir of distributing seditious writings, especially the works of Paine, was of the flimsiest character. The societies of reform had always been orderly and had exercised the right of petition and the demand for reform only by peaceable methods. But the evil in the eyes of the government was that educated men were enlightening the common people and teaching them their rights. It was a foregone conclusion what the result of the trial would be; for the judge had taken care to pack the jury with men who would render the right verdict. Muir was found guilty on the 31st of August, 1793, and was sentenced to transportation to Botany Bay for fourteen years. But the trial of Palmer which followed next month aroused almost as much interest as that of Muir.

The arrest of Palmer arose from the democratic agitation in Dundee. It was the centre of the weaving industry and had suffered from the effects of the war. The weavers were out of work and complained of the dearness of food. In such an atmosphere the doctrines of Paine found ready acceptance and mobs paraded the streets shouting for the rights of man. One of the weavers had issued an address in which the government was attacked in these words: "You are plunged into a war by a wicked Ministry and a compliant Parliament, who seem careless and unconcerned for your interest, the end and design of which is almost too horrid to relate, the destruction of a whole people merely because they will be free. Your treasure is wasting fast; the blood of your brethren is pouring out, and all this to form chains for a free people and eventually to rivet them on yourselves."<sup>8</sup>

This address was found to be in the handwriting of a Unitarian minister, named Palmer, though it had been originally written by the weaver of Dundee and only rewritten and toned down by Palmer. Nevertheless, this gave Dundas the opportunity to arrest Palmer whom he called "the most dangerous rebel of Scotland." He was associated with the Scottish Friends of Liberty and the government aimed to strike at this association through Palmer. He was tried by the same illegal methods as Muir and condemned to transportation for five years.

These trials were watched with intense interest both in Scotland and England and the convictions and sentences created a great noise. Men denounced the trials as a travesty on justice.

<sup>7</sup> "Trial of Thomas Muir," p. 84.

<sup>8</sup> J. Holland Rose, "William Pitt and the Great War," p. 177.

Fox and Grey brought the matter before Parliament and tried to obtain a mitigation of the sentences, but without avail. Moreover, the trials far from checking the spread of seditious doctrine and hindering the growth of the democratic movement, served only to extend it. Discontent continued to grow and political agitation to increase. The democratic societies awoke to new life and activity which culminated in a Convention at Edinburgh in November 1793.

Thomas Hardy, at the end of May 1793, wrote in the name of the London Corresponding Society to the Society at Edinburgh urging an intimate co-operation between the two societies. The Edinburgh Society heartily responded to this appeal and suggested that the work of reform had been hampered because, "the associations with you are no more than an aristocracy for the good of the people" and that "if reform was to be successful, it must turn for its support to the people themselves."<sup>9</sup>

It was about this time that the Society at Norwich suggested the idea of holding a National Convention. They stated that they found themselves in harmony with the London Constitutional Society in thinking that "an address to the King, futile; a petition to Parliament (as a conquered people), tolerable; a National Convention (if circumstances admitted) best of all." "To what an alarming crisis are we arrived; the junto is founded and established; the people become the prey, and (to adopt the phrase of an Hibernian apostate) are treated as the swinish multitude, except the privilege of fattening."<sup>10</sup>

The London Corresponding Society did not countenance the idea of holding a National Convention at this time; but urged the Norwich Society to continue their work of educating the people in their rights and, "above all, orderly and courageously preparing yourselves for the event; for, as it is natural to suppose that those who now prey on the public will not willingly yield up their enjoyments, nor repossess us of our rights without a struggle."<sup>11</sup>

At first, the Convention was composed of delegates from the democratic societies of Scotland and passed resolutions of a mild nature; but the coming of the delegates from London changed its character and mode of procedure. The London Corresponding Society sent Margarot and Gerald, and the Constitutional Society, Sinclair and Yorke, as delegates. The Convention then

<sup>9</sup> The Trial of Horne-Tooke, Vol. II, p. 327.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

adopted the name of "The British Convention of Delegates of the People associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments."

Its discussions became more animated and pervaded by French ideas. French forms of procedure were introduced and they spoke of "granting honours of a sitting" and the "order of the day," "Liberty Court and Liberty Hall," "the first year of the British Convention," and addressed each other as "citizens."<sup>12</sup>

Towards the close of the session, the Convention passed a resolution declaring, "it to be the duty of citizens to resist any law, similar to that lately passed in Dublin, for preventing the assembly of a Convention in Great Britain; and the delegates resolved to prepare to summon a Convention if the following emergencies should arise—an invasion, the landing of Hanoverian troops, the passing of a Convention Act, or the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act."

When it became evident that the government would disperse the Convention, it passed a resolution that a Secret Committee should appoint a place of meeting when any emergency should arise and then call the delegates again together. Dundas on reading of the reports of the Convention in the *Edinburgh Gazette*, determined to disperse it and to arrest its leaders. Margarot, Gerald, Sinclair, and Skirving, the secretary, were arrested. Sinclair turned informer and his indictment was not pressed. But the others were brought to trial from January to March, 1794, and charged with being members of a Convention whose resolutions, under the pretence of procuring a reform of Parliament, were evidently of a dangerous and destructive tendency, following the example of the French Convention. They were convicted on this charge and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.

During the trials, the London Corresponding Society met in January 1794, to protest against the dispersion of the British Convention and the arrest of its members. It issued an address to the people of Great Britain in which it referred to the Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the glorious Revolution of 1688 as the bulwarks of British liberty, quoting extensively from the Great Charter and stating that their cause was one and the same with that of their Irish and Scotch brethren. It passed a resolution to this effect: "That during the ensuing session of Parliament, the general committee of this society do meet daily, for the purpose of watching the proceedings of The Parliament,

<sup>12</sup> "Trial of Joseph Gerald," pp. 17-18.

and the administration of the Government of this country. And that upon the first introduction of any bill, or motion, inimical to the liberties of the people, such as for landing foreign troops in Great Britain or Ireland, for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, for proclaiming Martial Law, or for preventing the people from meeting in Societies for Constitutional Information, or any other innovation of a similar nature, that on any of these emergencies, the general committee shall issue summonses to call a general convention of the people, to be held at such place and in such a manner as shall be specified in the summons, for the purpose of taking such measures into their consideration.”<sup>13</sup>

The Society of Constitutional Information passed resolutions of even a more drastic nature and denounced the miscarriage of justice in Scotland and compared the judge who presided at the trials to the “infamous Jeffreys, who at the era of the glorious revolution, for the many iniquitous sentences which he had passed, was torn to pieces by a brave and injured people.” At this time Horne-Tooke was in the chair, but when the next resolution was proposed, he surrendered it to the more radical Gerald. In this resolution they condemned the severity of injustice in Scotland as a danger to justice in England, and that it endangered the safety of Englishmen and reprobated the sentence of their Scotch brethren for conduct, which merited only approbation, to “Botany Bay, a punishment hitherto inflicted only on felons.” “That we see with regret, but we see without fear, that the period is fast approaching when the liberties of Britons must depend not upon reason to which they have long appealed, nor on their powers of expressing it, but on their firm and undaunted resolution to oppose tyranny by the same means by which it is exercised.”<sup>14</sup>

It is clear that the idea of employing force to obtain their rights was suggested by the resolution, but there is no evidence that this idea ever took practical shape in action.

During the next two months the government met these resolutions of the societies by arresting and bringing to trial some of the more active democrats. Eaton, a publisher, was arrested for publishing a pamphlet, “Politics for the People, or Hogswash,” based upon a parable which Thelwall had used in a popular lecture of how a game-cock with his ermine-spotted breast, the fine gold trappings about his neck, and a fine ornamented thing about

<sup>13</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke, p. 343.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

his head, his crown or cockscorn, lorded over all the fowls in the barnyard. The sensitive officials held that this meant "our Sovereign Lord, the King"; but the jury returned a verdict of not guilty."<sup>15</sup>

Walker of the Constitutional Society of Manchester was also put on trial on the charge of stirring up an insurrection of the people; but the charges were false and based upon the words of a lying informant, and he was acquitted. The government was defeated in these efforts to bring the democrats to justice. But more alarming reports were soon abroad. The talk of a National Convention was in the air. Hardy had addressed a circular letter to the Democratic societies in which he said: "Citizens, the critical moment is arrived, and Britons must either assert with zeal and firmness their claims to liberty, or yield without resistance to the chains that ministerial usurpation is forging for them. Will you co-operate with us in the only peaceable measure that now presents itself with any prospect of success? . . . We need not intimate to you that, notwithstanding the unparalleled audacity of a corrupt and over-bearing faction, which at present tramples on the rights and liberties of the people, our meetings cannot in England be interrupted without the previous adoption of a Convention bill; . . . let us form, then, another British Convention. We have a central situation in our view, which, we believe, would be most convenient for the whole island; but which we forbear to mention (entreating your confidence in this particular) till we have the answer of the societies with which we are in correspondence. Let us have your answer, then, by the 20th at farthest, earlier if possible, whether you approve of the measure, and how many delegates you can send, with the number also, if possible, of your societies."<sup>16</sup>

A few days later Hardy wrote to the Constitutional Society about the Convention and urged that such a Convention of the Friends of Freedom was necessary to secure themselves "from future illegal and scandalous prosecutions," and adding, "we pledge ourselves to the public to pursue every legal method speedily to accomplish so desirable a purpose."<sup>17</sup> The two societies came to an understanding and appointed committees of correspondence to arrange for a public meeting with the Convention in view. Hardy also approached the Friends of the People on the same project, but they rejected his idea of a Con-

<sup>15</sup> Cestre, "Life of Thelwall," p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> The Trial of Horne-Tooke, p. 363.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

vention, saying, that they "do not think that which is recommended in your letter is likely to serve its professed purpose," and declined to send delegates.<sup>18</sup>

On the 14th of April at Chalk Farm, the London Corresponding Society held a public meeting at which a large crowd attended and passed resolutions condemning the rapid advance of despotism in Britain; the arbitrary proceedings of the court of Scotland; the unjustifiable measures of arming one part of the people against the other; and commending Lord Stanhope for a motion in Parliament against the landing of Hessian troops; and ending with the statement, "That it is the firm conviction of this society, that a steady perseverance in the same bold and energetic sentiments, which have lately been avowed by the Friends of Freedom, cannot fail of crowning, with ultimate triumph, the virtuous cause in which we are engaged, since whatever may be the interested opinions of hereditary senators or packed majorities of pretended representatives; truth and liberty, in an age so enlightened as the present, must be invincible and omnipotent."<sup>19</sup>

A week before, a meeting of the Friends of Justice and Liberty had been held at Castle Hill, Sheffield, "in behalf of the persecuted patriots, Citizens Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Margarot, and Gerald," and also for petitioning the House of Commons for a reform in the representation of the people. The meeting was attended by from 10,000 to 12,000 people. Henry Yorke was the speaker on this occasion and presented the petition; and in the course of his address, he indulged in some very seditious language and prophesied the time would come "when by the incessant thunderings of the press, the meanest cottager shall be enlightened, and the sun of reason shall shine in its fullest meridian over us; then, the commanding voice of the whole people shall recommend the five hundred and fifty-eight gentlemen in St. Stephen's chapel to go about their business."<sup>20</sup>

Information came to the government that some of the members of the Sheffield society had been preparing arms and fashioning pikes. It was held that this was done with a view to a coming insurrection; but it was claimed by the accused, later, that it was a measure of self-defence against the threatened violence by the Reeves' Association of the town.

As the rumour of the proposed Convention spread, the govern-

<sup>18</sup> Trial of Horne-Tooke, p. 401.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 403.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 381.

ment became alarmed and Pitt formed a secret committee to consider all the evidence against the Democratic societies, and he decided that the time had come to strike at the leaders of the movement. Accordingly, Hardy was arrested on May 12th, and Horne-Tooke and Thelwall a few days later, and then ten others of the leading members of the societies. On the 16th of May, Pitt laid the evidence of the secret committee before the House and then launched forth in as virulent a speech as a statesman ever uttered against the London Corresponding Society. He called the attention of the House "to the history of a society which, despicable and contemptible though the persons who composed it were, as to talents, education, and influence, yet when looked at with cautious attention, and compared with the objects they had in view, and the motives on which they acted, namely, that great moving principle of all Jacobinism, the love of plunder, devastation, and robbery, which now bore the usurped name of liberty, and that system of butchery and carnage which had been made the instrument of enforcing those principles, would appear to be formidable in exact proportion to the meanness and contemptibility of their characters. Of that society the characteristic was, that, being composed of the lower orders of people, it had within it the means of unbounded extension, and concealed in itself the seeds of rapid increase."<sup>21</sup>

He called attention to its rapid growth with 30 divisions in London, many of them having 600 members and extending in all the large manufacturing towns. Not content with pouring out his scorn upon the society, he aroused the fears of the House by picturing the awful perils to life and property from its existence—a policy which succeeded in alarming the country and making it submissive to the repeal of the Habeas Corpus Act. He says, "Who was there that knew what Jacobins and Jacobin principles were, but must see, in the pretences of reform in parliament held out by these societies, the arrogant claims of the same class of men as those who lorded it in France, to trample upon the rich, and crush every description of men, women, and children; the dark designs of a few, making use of the name of the people to govern all: a plan founded in the arrogance of wretches, the outcasts of society, tending to enrich themselves, by depriving of property, and of life, all those who were distinguished either for personal worth or for opulence?—a plan which had been long felt by the unfortunate people of France in all its aggravated horrors and which, he feared, would long, very long, continue

<sup>21</sup> Pitt's Speeches, Vol. II, p. 28.



to be felt by that ill-fated country." <sup>22</sup> He ended his speech by moving that his Majesty bring in a bill "to secure and detain all such persons as should be suspected of conspiring against his person and his government." This motion was carried by 201 votes to 39, Fox and Grey voting in the opposition. The bill was at once introduced for "suspending the operation of the Habeas Corpus Act." Fox, Grey, and Sheridan strenuously opposed the bill. Fox had said that the bill "would impair, if not totally destroy, the Constitution of the country," and "if there are such persons, to be sure you cannot like them; but never imagine that persecution will get the better of their opinions, whatever they may be." <sup>23</sup>

Pitt assailed these arguments along the usual lines of danger from French principles. The debate was hotly and long contested and decision was not reached until three o'clock the following morning (Sunday) by a vote of 183 to 33.

The condition of France at this time accounted for the alarm of the government. The Terror was at its height and the guillotine was doing its deadly work under the supervision of Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety. The horizon seemed dark and the government feared a French invasion and did not care to take any chances with disturbances at home. However, the prospects changed for the better with the great naval victory under Howe on the 1st of June and the fall of Robespierre in the next month. This relieved the situation and removed the fear of invasion; but the purpose of the government remained unaltered. It determined to push on the trials of the democrats and to destroy the societies by the conviction and punishment of their leaders. The trials came off in November 1794. Hardy was tried first and was charged with planning a Convention whose aim was "to destroy the Constitution and to compass the death of the King." This was to try him for high treason. Hardy was defended by Erskine, who by his brilliancy and cleverness won a victory with the jury and they returned a verdict of "not guilty." The trial created an intense interest throughout the kingdom and upon its result depended the lives of many hundreds of men. During the trial Erskine turned to Thelwall and said, "that if Hardy was found guilty on such evidence, he himself and the rest of the Whigs 'must all fly to America without delay.'" <sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Pitt's Speeches, Vol. II, p. 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>24</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of Charles, Earl Grey," p. 83.

Grey who attended the trial believed that his own life was in danger, for if Hardy was guilty of high treason for demanding universal suffrage and a Convention of delegates as had been done in 1782, then the Friends of the People would be liable to the same fate. Grey wrote to his future wife, at this time, "Of this trial I will say nothing. I have no power to express my abhorrence of the whole proceeding. If this man is hanged, there is no safety for any man. Innocence no longer affords protection to a person obnoxious to those in Power, and I do not know how soon it may come to my turn."<sup>25</sup>

Hardy tells us "that the Government felt so confident of a conviction that they had prepared 800 warrants, 300 of which were actually signed, in order to be ready to be executed that very night and the next morning, in case a verdict of guilty was returned. Who the persons thus marked for destruction were Hardy did not learn, but he is compelled to believe the authority upon which he states the damning fact."<sup>26</sup>

Hardy's own account of the effect of his acquittal shows its remarkable reception by the anti-democratic mob of London and the discredit that it threw upon the government. He says, "Immediately on the words 'not guilty' being pronounced by the foreman of the worthy Jury, the Session House, where the Court sat, was almost rent with loud and reiterated shouts of applause. The vast multitudes that were waiting anxiously without caught the joyful sound, and like an electric shock, or rapidity of lightning, the glad tidings spread throughout the town."<sup>27</sup>

Horne-Tooke was tried next. The acquittal of Hardy was in his favour and he threw discredit upon the government by calling Pitt as a witness and showing that he had attended a meeting of delegates in 1782 to consider the reform of Parliament. At the end of a week, Horne-Tooke was found "not guilty" by the jury. Thelwall was then tried, and he, too, was declared "not guilty." It was evident that the government could not carry its point of convicting these men of high treason, though it might have convicted them on seditious utterances. The government now withdrew its prosecution and set at liberty the remaining prisoners.

The London Corresponding Society now renewed its efforts in educating the workingmen in political ideas and in pushing its propaganda for universal suffrage. Thelwall continued his

<sup>25</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of Charles, Earl Grey," p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Hardy, "Memoirs," p. 42.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

public lectures which drew large crowds. In 1795 the Society increased its members to 2,000. But the government had not given up its purpose for crushing the societies. An opportunity for pursuing its policy was found in the attack upon the king when he drove in the state coach to open Parliament on October 29, 1795. The coach was surrounded by a great mob who cried: "No Pitt. No War. Bread, Bread. Peace, Peace," and one of the mob threw a missile at the coach and broke the window. It was said that it was a bullet that was fired; but the evidence is against this theory. Place's account of this is probably the true one and completely clears the London Corresponding Society from any part in the matter. He says, "that on the 29th of October, only five members of the Society were in St. James' Park on that day and that no one of the five knew that any other member beside himself was present." "When the State coach nearly reached the House of Peers, one of the windows was broken. The spot where this happened was in the narrow part of St. Margaret's Street, between St. Margaret's Chapel and Henry VII Chapel. From a bow window in one of these houses it is supposed something was thrown against one of the windows of the State coach, making a hole in the glass." "A pretence was set up that the King had been shot at and an inference was drawn that it was the result of a plot to kill him."<sup>28</sup>

The ministers, whose power in the House of Commons was declining and who had lost the support of Wilberforce and his party by their refusal to listen to proposals to abolish the slave trade, being confronted by a strong opposition in favour of peace, they seized upon this supposed attack upon the king to rally their followers and to alarm the country. Lord Grenville in the House of Lords introduced a Treason Bill, "an Act for the Safety and Preservation of His Majesty's Person and Government." And on November 1795, Pitt gave notice of his intention to introduce "a bill for the more effectual preventing of seditious meetings and assemblies." By this time, the alarm of the country was widespread and loyal addresses were sent up to Parliament from all sides. "The newspapers howled treason," writes Place. "The over-loyal citizens of London took the lead in calling public meetings; the trickeries resorted to, and the fooleries which were displayed, seemed almost incredible. Loyal addresses were got up in every possible way. Petitions in favour of the bills were handed about; meetings were held to support ministers and to encourage them to establish, if possible, a perfect despotism.

<sup>28</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27. 812. Vol. II, pp. 48, 49.

Threats, intimidations, persecutions, were all resorted to. All means were fair to persuade or to compel people to sign loyal addresses and petitions, while those who were known to be adverse to the conduct of the Ministers were calumniated in the grossest manner and injured in every possible way. Complaint was useless; redress in any way was hopeless; the loyal talked and acted just as they pleased. Those who thought at all on public matters and were opposed to the Ministers and who were not under some local influence, came forward to oppose the Bills.”<sup>29</sup>

These two bills, called “Gagging Acts” against Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices, created a storm of indignation among the Reformers and they endeavoured to rouse the country against them. The first bill made it illegal for more than fifty persons to assemble for any purpose not approved by the magistrates: the second bill against treasonable practices made it high treason, punishable with transportation, to speak or write against the Constitution. Of course Fox led the way in opposition of the bills and his spirit and example served to awaken opposition among those who were not allied with the democrats. “Meetings were held in a vast number of places. All for opposing the bills were open public meetings; most of those in favour of the bills were close corporations, or societies partaking of the nature of corporations, or military bodies, or clergy; very few were open public meetings.”

Loyal addresses numbered 519, of which 90 were from military bodies and from the clergy. Petitions and signatures were obtained for the bills. There were in favour of the bills 65 petitions and 29,922 signatures, while opposed to the bills there were 94 petitions and 131,284 signatures. In Parliament there was a protracted debate, but it was without avail in stopping the passing of the bills on December 17, 1795.

The London Corresponding Society held its last public meeting on December 2d, at which it passed a vote of thanks to Charles Fox for his declaration in the House of Commons: “That neither the Commons nor the Lords, nor the King, nor the three combined as the Legislature, can be considered as having the power to enslave the people; but that they may either separately or unitedly do such acts as would justify the resistance of the people.”<sup>30</sup>

The effect of the bills was to place all the power in the hands of the ministers which they used to crush the Democratic societies.

<sup>29</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 812, Vol. II, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

The London Corresponding Society tried to continue its existence by reorganising its divisions and limiting them to 45 members; but the interest in the Society gradually declined and the leaders withdrew from all relations with it and the Society fell into the hands of men without judgment and more radical tendencies.

The year 1797 was a time when the country was seething with discontent due to the failure of the war, financial troubles in England, and rebellion in Ireland. "The year 1797," says Place, "was a year of great disquiet and apprehension. Ireland was all but in open rebellion; its shores were menaced by a French invasion. The Bank of England stopped payment. The fleet mutinied, the people were alarmed, and notwithstanding some important naval victories, a solemn gloom pervaded the nation which exhibited symptoms of great discontent."<sup>31</sup>

Under these conditions, the democratic societies awoke to renewed activity though much limited in their scope by the force of the Coercion Bills. Thelwall continued to lecture and avoided prosecution by using strange subjects to veil his political teachings. He gave a course of lectures on classical history under the cover of Roman history and threw out many ideas about republicanism. His lectures were finally broken up; then he toured the provinces and lectured with some success; but in the end he was assailed by the magistrates and loyalist mobs and driven into retirement.

The hope of reform now remained with the small body of Whigs within the House of Commons who seized upon the disasters of this year to urge upon the House the need of reform. In May 1797, Grey introduced a reform bill with a definite plan in which he suggested a Parliament for three years and the poll to be taken on the same day in all places. He proposed to raise the county representation of England and Wales from 92 members to 133 and to extend the voting to copy-holders and lease-holders. He also advocated the abolition of rotten boroughs and the transference of a proportionate representation of the large towns. He objected to universal suffrage, not because it would lead to a wild democracy, but for the opposite reason that it would enfranchise the servile and dependent classes. The household suffrage seemed to him better and would give a representation to the best elements among the people.

The debate upon the measure ended in defeat, as was to be expected from the temper of the House of Commons; but the vote showed that there were still many members in the House who

<sup>31</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 812, Vol. II, p. 82.

held to the cause of reform. The vote was 91 for and 256 against the bill. This defeat was followed by what was called at the time the secession from Parliament when the Whigs retired from the sessions of the House and for three years gave up any opposition against the government. The ministers at once seized the opportunity to crush out the remains of the democratic movement. Men were arrested and imprisoned without cause and kept there for some years. The secret committee of the House struck at the leaders of the London Corresponding Society and arrested them on a general warrant charging that, at the meetings of the London Corresponding Society for above two years before this time (April 1798), it had avowed that the object of the Society was to form a Republic, by the assistance of France.

Place characterises this charge "as a base lie." "No such avowal was ever made; no proposition of the kind was ever discussed; on the contrary, it was the prevalent opinion of the Society that the people ought to work out their own regeneration." <sup>32</sup>

As to the general opinions of the Society, Place goes on to say, "A very few were for using violence; for putting an end to the Government by any means foreign or domestic; there were always a few and they had no weight in the Society. It is worthy of being noticed that notwithstanding the vigilance of the Government and the attempt continually made by the spies to induce the Committees to do acts which might be prosecuted, neither the Committees nor the Society ever did an illegal act or published a libel. The Government dispersed one of its meetings and fined some of them; yet except in the case of Jones which was clearly an improper conviction, they were never able to convict any one of its members; and even during the reign of terror, never ventured to proceed against any one of its publications as libelous; nor any one of its members (except the two deputies) for sedition, committed either in writing or speaking. It bestowed epithets enough and made many threats of what it would do, but it never dared to venture to commence legal proceedings. These are the answers to all the calumnies uttered or printed against the Society." <sup>33</sup>

In spite of this, the Government did not hesitate to imprison the democrats. Not only did the reign of terror under Pitt in 1798 destroy the London Corresponding Society, but also the af-

<sup>32</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 812, Vol. II, p. 108.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 115.

filiated societies throughout the kingdom; and the years which followed drove the democratic movement underground. These were years in which men could not express opinions on political subjects and in which the liberties of England were sacrificed to the exigencies of the war. Of this period Place writes, "The years 1797, 1798, 1799, and 1800 were years of terror. A disloyal word was enough to bring some punishment upon any man's head; laughing at the awkwardness of a volunteer Corps, was criminal; people were apprehended and sentenced on board a man of war for this breach of decorum, which was punished as a terrible crime." "In Lincolnshire a Blacksmith for damning the king and calling the Government a despotism, was sentenced by the Quarter Sessions 'to be kept in solitary confinement without seeing or speaking to any person, except the person who takes him his victuals, for the space of twelve months and then to enter into recognisance for his future good behaviour.' The condition in the country was frightful and much suffering was endured by the people. The newspapers were terrorised and were not allowed to print any criticism of the Government." "The latter part of the year 1799 and the whole of 1800 was a period of famine as well as terror. Soup shops were established and a vast number of the people of London were fed as paupers."<sup>34</sup>

In the beginning of Thomas Hardy's *Memoir of the London Corresponding Society*, he quoted a sentence from Dr. Jebb, one of the leaders of the reform movement of 1780 and a member of the Society of Constitutional Information. It was this: "May ye employ the most active exertions in the service of *Man*. Human efforts will, at best, appear feeble; but *No effort is lost*." This was Hardy's watchword and expresses his opinion of the democratic movement of which he was at the same time an organiser and a leader. The democratic movement was neither destroyed nor crushed by the prosecutions of Pitt. It was only driven out of sight where it continued to spread and grow among the working classes until it came to light again in more favourable times with a new power and a political momentum which at last overthrew the barriers of entrenched privilege and power. The years 1792 to 1798 were marked in England and Scotland by laying the foundations, and enunciating those general principles of democracy which finally gained acceptance by the masses of the people. Starting with the upper classes, and especially with the plan of the Duke of Richmond in 1780, democracy

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 110-12.

gradually filtered down until it seized the minds of the working classes, and once accepted by them, no repressive measures, no laws, no prosecutions, could obliterate the impression that had been made upon their minds. Hardy, the workingman's representative and organising genius, Major Cartwright and Horne-Tookey, representing the gentlemen of the middle class, and Charles Grey, the leader of the Whigs in the House of Commons and the country, combined their forces in the interest of reform. But the impulse that gave to democracy its influence and power was undoubtedly the genius of Paine in his "Rights of Man." He furnished, for the first time, the principles on which democracy is based, and showed the true force of these principles in the French Revolution. He foresaw that these principles, once promulgated, were destined to go on to their logical conclusion; that though thwarted and obstructed by governments, they could not be overthrown; and that ultimately they must win the victory and usher in a new era when the masses would claim their right to a share in the government. The repressive measures of Pitt have confirmed this conclusion. Beginning his career as an advocate of reform, he ended it by opposing reform and in trying to stamp it out by repressive legislation. Instituting a reign of terror in which he tried to hold back the movement of democracy which he felt was destructive to society and subversive to the Constitution, he ended by spreading the principles of democracy among all classes of the people.

The history of England might have been different, if Pitt had pursued a different method and England might have been spared many evils had the industrial revolution taken place under a reform government. But the French Revolution and its example of the practical workings of democracy alarmed men by its excesses. It was not a representative government that Pitt feared; but the social upheaval which stood like a black shadow in the background of the coming democracy. He feared that any agitation of the question of reform would open the flood-gates to social change, and as in France, lead to the dethronement of the king, the destruction of the Constitution, and the establishment of a republic.

All the discussions in Parliament reveal that it was the bugbear of the French Revolution that determined the action of Pitt and led him to exaggerate the dangers from the democratic movement. While Fox and Grey deprecated this spirit and charged that Pitt fostered the panic for the purpose of dividing the Whig party and that the Democratic societies would have



been satisfied with moderate measures of reform, yet there is ground for believing that this would only have been the first step in a radical reform which under the present state of opinion among the democrats might have gone far. Whatever had been the character of the reform, it would not have arrested the democratic movement. It would still have gone forward, and gathering strength by the concessions made to it, democracy would have increased its demands until the government became in fact, what it was held to be in theory, a government of the people, and for the people.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RISING TIDE OF DEMOCRACY

WHILE the repressive measures adopted by the government of Pitt, supported by the Tory majority in Parliament, had led to the breaking up of the Democratic societies and destroyed all public agitation for reform after 1797, yet the apathy which settled down upon the political world as expressed by the secession of the Whigs from Parliament, by no means destroyed the democratic movement in England. It was simply driven underground and continued its subterranean work among the working classes. The next eighteen years were a period of education of the working classes in their political rights. It might be called the incubation period of English democracy, for in these years, when the thought and energy of the nation were absorbed in the Napoleonic war, the working classes were learning lessons of co-operation and awakening to the consciousness of their rights.

It was in these days that William Cobbett and Francis Place formed the associations and organised the campaign of political education which prepared the masses to act when the long night of political apathy was over and the coming of peace in 1815 and the economic problems which arose brought again political agitation to the front. When this new movement of democracy blazed out before the eyes of the Tory world, it came as a great shock to men who had supposed that the victory of Waterloo was to be followed by political quiet and the simple adjustment of economic conditions as they affected the land and the Corn Laws. But it was soon evident that a new spirit was at work in the nation, and that the masses in the industrial centres as well as the peasants in the counties were agitated by political theories, and under their leaders were demanding reform.

The economic changes effected by the industrial revolution and the social transformation wrought by the increased poverty

of the masses and the alienation of the people from the land by laws enclosing the commons, at once made themselves felt in the revival of political agitation. The democratic movement was now no longer confined to small groups of workingmen and a few middle-class leaders as in the last decade of the eighteenth century, but was supported by the masses of the people. The government found itself confronted by new leaders who knew the power of organisation and could appeal to the people and who were quite different in temper and spirit from the mobs which formed the basis of the Church and King clubs of the last century.

To understand this awakening of the masses from their lethargy, we must consider the influence of such men as Cobbett and Place, together with the forces exerted by the social and economic changes of the time.

William Cobbett, who had lived in America for some years during the last decade of the eighteenth century, had issued a newspaper in support of the Federalists and in opposition to the democrats. He championed the policy of Washington in regard to the treaty with England and earned the commendation of the British Government. On his return to England after 1800, he was offered employment under the government, but declined the offer. In America he had come into contact with the leaders of the Democratic party and disliked their methods and their spirit; but coming into close contact with the British system, the venality and corruption of the government, and the farce of the elections, his eyes were opened and he changed his politics. In 1806 he determined to revive the democratic movement and to this end he began to publish the *Political Register* to educate the workingmen. The election of Westminster in that year furnished him with an opportunity to appeal directly to the electors, as the constituency was a "scot and lot" borough with a franchise of almost universal suffrage.

He wrote a series of letters to the electors of Westminster in which he showed how the members had been returned to Parliament by an understanding between the Tories and the Whigs, and pointed out to the electors how they were tricked by the government. "The letter," says Francis Place, "was much read, and was very useful. It produced shame in many and a desire to do something on another occasion; but it did not remove from them the notion, which long practice had confirmed, that a contested election could only be carried by money, money in immense sums; and this prevented me from expecting any

extraordinary exertions would be made by the electors 'for themselves at the expected General Election.'" <sup>1</sup>

The election came off shortly afterwards and the same scenes were enacted as in previous elections; but a new spirit was abroad; for Place had organised the borough of Westminster in a direct appeal to the voters, without the use of bribery, and enlisted the voters in support of Sir Francis Burdett, one of the wealthiest men of England and an advocate of reform.

"It was arranged," says Place, "that no money should be expended on account of the election but by vote of the committee, on a printed form filled up and signed by its order. That there should be no paid counsellors, attorneys, inspectors, nor canvassers, no bribing, no paying of rates, no treating, no cockades, no paid constables, excepting two to keep the committee-room doors. That notice of our intended proceedings should be sent to the magistrates, who should be warned to see that the peace was kept." <sup>2</sup>

Under such conditions the success of the candidate did not seem very hopeful; but the electors rallied to the new régime as organised by Place, and Sir Francis Burdett was returned at the head of the poll. The outcome of this election was to bring Francis Place to the front as one of the leaders and organisers of the democratic movement and his committee at Westminster continued in permanent session and became a political power in all subsequent elections, a power in guiding the rising democracy in its efforts for reform.

Burdett now became the leader of the radical element in Parliament, and in 1810 a contest arose between the member from Westminster and the House of Commons which attracted the attention of the country. An organiser of a debating society near Covent Garden had been summoned before the House of Commons for certain utterances on the exclusion of strangers by the First Lord of the Admiralty. He went to the House and made abject submission and was committed to Newgate. Burdett moved for his release and delivered a speech which was published in the *Political Register*. The House of Commons summoned him to the bar for breach of privilege and a motion was made to commit him to the Tower. Burdett barricaded himself in his house and huge crowds collected so that the Horse Guards were called out to maintain order and clear the streets. For the next three nights the guards encountered great difficulties,

<sup>1</sup> Graham Wallas, "Life of Francis Place," p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

and by their brutal methods of riding upon the pavements to drive the people away, caused much terror and injured some people. Burdett appealed to the sheriffs for protection, and they came with a body of constables and "removed the soldiers to some distance each way from Sir Francis Burdett's house"; but the agitation continued to increase and great multitudes continued to collect before Burdett's house and some of the leaders like Cochrane urged insurrection. The ministry, becoming alarmed, determined to call out the volunteers and "all the troops within a hundred miles of London, both cavalry and infantry, were ordered to march to the Metropolis."

To the conspirators who desired an insurrection, Place pointed out its dangers and the folly of attempting such a plan. Writing later in 1826, he said, "I did not then, I do not now, disapprove of Sir Francis Burdett's notions. Had circumstances been such as to promise an effectual resistance, not only at the house of Sir Francis but anywhere else, had there been anything like a sufficient body organised to have assured the soldiers that power enough existed to protect them—there would have been a fair chance in the then disposition of men, and of no small portion of the army, that a successful effort at the outset would have given them confidence, and that many and perhaps nearly all the troops in London would have revolted. But there was no organisation and no arms, and to have resisted under such circumstances would have been madness."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the troops broke into the house of Burdett and carried him off to the Tower amid a yelling mob.

Burdett was kept in custody from April 9th to June 21st, till the prorogation of Parliament. The House did not dare to follow the same plan they took with regard to Wilkes in 1769, and deprive him of his seat in Parliament; for public opinion in Middlesex and Westminster was too much aroused to be further provoked and a contest with the electors would have resulted only in a similar defeat.

While the radical movement was making headway with the working classes, yet it was looked upon with disfavour by the Whig leaders and politicians. Place charged them with deserting the people; and there was much truth in this, as Grey, a thorough aristocrat, rather regretted his association with the democratic movement in the nineties and was opposed to the excesses which had been committed in connection with the contest of Sir Francis Burdett. At this time Grey wrote to Lord

<sup>3</sup>"Life of Place," p. 52.

Holland, "The persons whom you designate Burdettites and Jacobins are in truth the best friends of the Court. By diverting public attention from all useful and practical objects, they provide the best means of escape for the Ministers from these difficulties in which their folly and wickedness have involved them. They aim at nothing but the degradation of all public character, their watchword being that all Ministers are alike, and that no advantage is to be derived from any change, thus co-operating most effectually with the Court in withdrawing all public confidence from its opponents. With this class of patriots I was at war in 1792, I am so now, and there is in my opinion a degree of meanness in appearing to court them in the slightest degree to which I never can submit." <sup>4</sup>

But Grey did not discern the signs of the times. The democratic movement was being led and pushed on by forces, economic and social, of whose power and influence few men at the time could form any estimate. The works of Paine and the early democrats were exerting their influence and the masses of the people were becoming more conscious of their rights and agitating for reform on a democratic basis. Moreover, the ideas which filled the minds of men were not alone for political reform, for economic change and social transformation. The Napoleonic war had divided England into two great classes, the rich and the poor. On the one side was an oligarchy of wealthy land-owners, an aristocratic church, and a public life sustained by venality and corruption: on the other, the poor just earning enough to subsist, driven from the land and working long hours for small wages in the new factories which had sprung up in the industrial centres of the north. The common lands by this time had been enclosed by law and the loss of these lands had brought much hardship upon the poor.

A school of thinkers began to appear who preached the new gospel of social transformation. Thomas Spence formulated his plan of "parochial partnership without private landlordism," and had been imprisoned in 1801 for publishing a book called "The Restorer of Society to its natural State." These ideas became known as the "Spence Plan," and, on his death in 1814, his work was taken up by Thomas Evans, who founded a "Society of Spencerian Philanthropists" which advocated a social utopia. It was about this time in 1813 that Robert Owen came to London and met Place, discussing with him his manuscript on the "New View of Society" in which he set forth his ideas that

<sup>4</sup> Trevelyan. "Earl Grey of the Reform Bill," p. 169.

man was the creature of circumstances and that all the institutions were at variance with the welfare and happiness of the people. Owen gathered in London a small group of disciples who propagated his views among the workingmen. The latter became later the advocates of a reform based upon the principles of socialism.

As long as the war lasted, the political agitation had been more or less sporadic; but the coming of peace in 1815 let loose all the pent-up energy of the masses and threw them into the conflict for political and social reform. During the war there had been high prices and heavy taxation and it had left as a legacy a huge debt of £800,000, falling prices, wide-spread unemployment, financial failures, closed factories, depression of land values and agricultural products. The condition of the poor was frightful. Brand said in the House of Commons in March 1816, "The poor in many cases have abandoned their own residences. Whole parishes have been deserted, and the crowd of paupers, increasing in numbers as they go from parish to parish, spread wider and wider this awful desolation."<sup>5</sup> These conditions were aggravated by one of the worst harvests in years.

Place gave a very good account of the prevailing conditions: "Distress and discontent spread far and wide. Many meetings were called, many plans prepared, and much assistance in several instances was given to the half-starved people. Riots occurred in several places, but they were suppressed by the army, and many who had been seduced to participate in them were severely, not to say, cruelly punished by the law. The people looked to Parliament for relief; but without avail."<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, so great was the distress and confusion that prevailed, it was recognised by the rich and prosperous that something must be done to give relief to the people. To this end a meeting was called on July 29, 1816, at the City of London Tavern, at which the Duke of York took the chair and was supported by the Dukes of Kent and Cambridge, the archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Manners, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Wilberforce, and others, and subscriptions were opened for relieving the distress and large sums were subscribed, "to be administered as charity and humbly received by them as such."

"Many concurred in these proceedings," writes Place, "from the best possible feeling, but the movers were generally com-

<sup>5</sup> "Life of Place," p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, p. 13.

posed of those who in some way preyed upon the people, and were desirous to keep them quiet by cajoling them."

This cajolery of the people was ably exposed by Lord Cochrane under the instigation of Place, who describes its effect: "The meanness of the Royal and noble party was made so conspicuous that an immense effect was produced, and the result was altogether such that it may be considered as one of the many events which tend to produce a useful mode of thinking, leading ultimately to the destruction of abuses, by increasing the intellectual contempt of the people; to the prevention of violence and disorder to the extent which otherwise must some day take place."<sup>7</sup>

About this time another meeting of a different character was held at Westminster, at which reform of Parliament was demanded as the cure for distress and for the confusion of the time. At this meeting seven resolutions were read by Place which became the platform of the democratic movement. These were:

1. "That the knowledge, the talent, the ingenuity, the industry, the capital, and moral conduct of the people of this country ought to have secured to them the full enjoyment of liberty and an abundance of everything useful to mankind.

2. "That all these invaluable characteristics of our people have by a corrupt House of Commons, which does not represent them, been perverted, or forcibly used to abridge their own liberties and to destroy the liberties of other nations.

3. "That the conduct of this corrupt House of Commons has long and extensively inflicted evils on other nations, which is now brought home to the people of this country in the most frightful shape.

4. "That the means used by this corrupt House of Commons against the liberties of mankind have exhausted our resources in unnecessary long continued and unusually bloody wars, injured our trade and manufactures, closed our mines, misused our agriculture, pauperized and starved the people.

5. "That the course pursued by this corrupt House of Commons has at length brought us into a situation in which palliatives are worse than useless, in which one peaceful remedy alone remains—namely, such a reform of the Commons' House of Parliament as shall make it, not a sham representation of the people, but as it ought to be, and as our ancestors intended it should be, and as but for the treason of their sons it would be: a real representation of the people.

<sup>7</sup>Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, p. 15.



6. "That unless the people will now do their easy duty and reform the House of Commons, they may hereafter have to reproach themselves with not having prevented a violent revolution, or with having suffered a cruel military despotism to be established upon the ruins of their liberties.

7. "That to avert these evils, to restore the liberties of their country and to propose those comforts which of right belongs to them, it is necessary that the people should assemble in counties, cities, boroughs, towns, villages, and parishes and insist upon a radical reform in the House of Commons of the whole people of the United Kingdom."<sup>8</sup>

When these resolutions were read at the meeting, they were received with the greatest enthusiasm. "Each of these resolutions was received," writes Place, "as the players have it, 'with unbounded applause,' and at the conclusion there were three distinct cheers. You will see in this a *Sign of the Times*." "As such I give it to you. Where are now the men of Rank and Talent, how is it that none of them appear anywhere to prosecute Parliamentary Reform; are they extinct? Are they frightened? Do they think that this hiding their heads in the hedge will hide the conditions of the country from those who feel it? Be this as it may, we see none of these persons now."<sup>9</sup>

But there were not wanting men of humbler talents to take up the cry of reform and to give voice to the people's demands and to denounce the selfishness of the ruling classes. Cobbett and Henry Hunt took the lead in this movement, holding that reform of the representation and the extension of the suffrage would solve the evils of the time. Place describes Hunt as "impudent, active, and vulgar. In almost all respects the best mob orator of the day,—if not indeed, the best which has ever existed. Cobbett's *Register* was in great repute; he patronised and puffed Hunt; always an unprincipled and cowardly bully, he had no respect for Hunt, but Hunt's head being none of the strongest, Cobbett used it for his own purposes."<sup>10</sup>

In order to aid his campaign, Cobbett reduced the price of his paper, the *Political Register*, from one shilling to two pence, and urged "all artisans and workmen" of England to demand universal suffrage. His paper soon attained an enormous circulation among the workingmen; 60,000 copies being sold in a short time. The paper received the nickname of the "Two penny

<sup>8</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Trash." The effect of this agitation was soon seen in the crystallisation of the discontent as Cobbett and Hunt went up and down the country enlisting the workmen in parliamentary reform. They organised immense meetings with huge processions carrying banners. One of these was held at Spa Fields, near London, November 15, 1816, at which was displayed a placard with the words: "The present state of Great Britain; four millions of people on the point of starvation, four millions with a bare subsistence, one and one-half millions in straitened circumstances, one-half million in dazzling luxury; our brothers in Ireland in a state even worse."

Hunt spoke at this meeting and inflamed the minds of the people, attacking the "unproductive classes"—the bondholders, the clergy, and demanded economy in religion and government. The meeting then adjourned until December 2d, to meet at the same place. "An hour before the time named for the meeting," writes Place, "a half crazy creature called Dr. Watson, a profligate son of his as crazy as his father, and several of their associates, mounted tricoloured cockades, and endeavoured by their speeches to persuade the people then assembled to revolt against the government. At the conclusion of young Watson's speech, he led off a portion of the rabble, to take possession of the Tower of London and overturn the Government."

On the way they plundered a shop and wounded the shop-keeper. "Then they proceeded to Cornhill and menaced the Royal Exchange, thence they went to Tower Hill and demanded the surrender of the place. Having performed these ridiculous feats, they dispersed." "The true meeting was held under the leadership of Henry Hunt, and after passing a resolution deprecating violence, the people quietly dispersed. Nevertheless the Government seized upon the revolutionary tactics of Watson and his followers and spoke of it as *the meeting*, whilst the actual public meeting is unnoticed, the rioters being alone called the meeting of Spa Fields."<sup>11</sup>

At the opening of Parliament, the king's speech expressed the need of passing laws against sedition. When this was reported to the people, it produced much dissatisfaction. This found expression in their attack upon the carriage of the regent which was pelted with stones on his return from opening Parliament. The disturbance furnished the government with a pretext for repressive measures and it formed a committee of secrecy which presented a report on the "practices, meetings, and combinations

<sup>11</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, pp. 22, 23.

evidently calculated to endanger the public peace," and denounced the "conspiracy to overturn all political institutions of the kingdom and undermine the principle of private property." Under the influence of these ideas the House of Commons voted the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and instructed magistrates to arrest all sellers and writers of blasphemous and seditious publications and to break up meetings which incited contempt of the government. This legislation was aimed at the public press.

But the government was dealing with a different public from that which Pitt faced in the agitation of the democrats of 1792. A great change had taken place in men's opinions and the march of knowledge and the spread of political ideas had touched the masses and roused the middle classes from their apathy and indifference to political questions. The French Revolution had broadened men's horizon and liberal ideas were slowly but surely making their way and changing men's views on the principles of government; even the younger generation of the aristocracy were affected by the spirit of the age. But the government was totally oblivious to the changes which had taken place, and Castlereagh and the ministry resorted to the old method of frightening the people by appeals to sedition, popery, treason, and the dangers to the social order. They tried to excite alarm which would give them a free hand to deal with the people as they pleased; but "the trick which had been played too often with success and the consequent result in the common assent of the debt and the taxes, operated as a warning even to the extravagantly loyal part of the people."

The government resorted to any and every means to excite public opinion. It "even endeavoured," says Place, "to frighten the property classes by calling attention to 'the poor harmless Spencerians with their library, consisting of an old Bible and three or four small publications, a high priest under the title of Librarian and some forty or fifty followers,' who 'were held out as a bugbear to all men of landed property; who were to succumb to these formidable and numerous speculators and compelled to resign their lands to the Parishes for the use of the whole community.'" <sup>12</sup>

The Whigs who were anxious to separate themselves from the popular movement of the workingmen, voted for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act and supported the government in all its repressive measures. Brougham who had been disappointed

<sup>12</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, p. 45.

in his ambition to stand for the popular constituency of Westminster, now attacked the Reformers and his attitude, "being taken advantage of by Castlereagh and his colleagues, led to consequences in the passing of bad laws and the provocation of outrages by the people, and by ministers against the people, which but for the infamous conduct of the Whigs, could not have taken place to the extent they did and been carried on as this conduct of the Whigs caused them to be carried on."<sup>13</sup>

Place, however, had not taken part in this agitation of the people and looked upon it as a premature movement. It had been largely confined to the working classes, led by Cobbett and Hunt and supported by the industrial masses in the great centres of Manchester and Nottingham. In Manchester the unemployed set out for London, each man carrying a blanket to sleep on at night and they were called "blanketeers." This mob of the unemployed caused much alarm and wild stories were reported of the march of the revolutionaries upon London; but they were a harmless crowd and had no other motive than to obtain work and find some relief for their miseries. They were stopped in their march by an armed force and many of them were seized and sent to prison. The government brought some of the leaders to trial and obtained some convictions. Watson, however, the leader of the rioters of Spa Fields, was tried but acquitted. On the whole the government did not succeed in their aims and their prosecutions served only to increase the discontent and to augment the forces which were slowly preparing for the triumph of democracy.

"We shall see as we go along," writes Place, "that notwithstanding the impediment thrown in the way of the people in their search for knowledge; notwithstanding the acts passed for the very purpose of strengthening the hands of the ministers; notwithstanding the immense increase of the standing army in time of peace; notwithstanding the excessive number of persons who were more or less dependent upon the government; notwithstanding the increased and increasing influence and patronage it possessed, its actual power was much less than that which Pitt had. That notwithstanding all the energy and impudence of the ministers, all the efforts of the aristocracy to sustain them, the power of public opinion was silently and slowly, yet continually bringing them under its influence and as continually lessening their power."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 809, Vol. II, p. 32.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

In the meantime the harvest of 1817 had been excellent and relieved much of the distress and the country quieted down. Burdett brought in a bill that year in the House of Commons, proposing universal suffrage, equal electoral districts, secret ballot, and annual elections; but the House was in no temper to consider the measure and it was not even discussed. It showed the direction in which the democratic movement was going and that the political agitation had resulted in securing a champion of democracy in Parliament. In 1818, the Whig opposition increased its numbers from 140 to 170, though it was still in a large minority in the House.

In 1819, there was a commercial crisis and consequent hard times and unemployment, especially in the industrial centres of the north. This was a signal for renewed agitation by the radicals and the democrats. In Lancashire there were many meetings among the weavers in the long summer evenings of July and there were reports of secret drilling. The government became alarmed and sent out circulars to the lord-lieutenants warning them of the agitation and the regent issued a proclamation against seditious meetings. On August 16, 1819, a huge meeting was held at St. Peter's Field (Peterloo) near Manchester where more than 80,000 people were assembled. The people came together bearing banners with these inscriptions: "Liberty and Death," "Universal Suffrage," "Secret Ballot," "No Duty on Corn." Henry Hunt was the speaker on this occasion. The magistrates determined to arrest Hunt; but the people opposed the constables. Then the armed yeomanry, composed of untrained men from the middle class, without any military experience, rode down the people and forced their way to the platform where Hunt gave himself up after protesting that there was no civil warrant for his arrest. Then the yeomanry, who had been irritated by the spirit of the people and the banners displayed, set up the cry, "Have at the flags" and charged the crowd and trampled them down with their horses and in the mêlée killed eleven and wounded from four to five hundred. This became known as the Peterloo massacre. It created much bitterness among the people and increased their hatred of the upper classes. Meetings of protest were held throughout the country and especially at London. Major Cartwright called a meeting at which more than 3,000 well-dressed persons attended, but they took no action owing to the violence of the more radical leaders like Watson. But a little later, Place organised a large meeting at Westminster. This meeting received no counte-

nance of the Whigs who were not ready yet to champion the cause of the people.

Place says: that "The Whigs would not come because parliamentary reform was to be mentioned. Be it so, but then it ought to be clearly understood that the Whigs make no part of the people. Up to this time, Sunday, September 12, there has been no meeting but of Reformers; not a finger has been stirred but by the Reformers; not a shilling has been subscribed but by the Reformers; even the necessary legal assistance would have been wanting but for the aid given by the Reformers; and the open violators of the laws, the murderers of the people, would have had their triumph complete. Add to this that the famous Whig, Lord Derby and his son, Lord Stanley, and the other Whig, Lord Belgrave, have all applauded the murderers."<sup>15</sup>

In spite of these difficulties, the meeting at Westminster was held and 100,000 persons attended "at the risk of military execution, and under the musquetry and sabres of the household army."

These demonstrations of the people were evidence that the democratic movement had reached large proportions and had the support of the masses of the nation. Light was spreading and the people were no longer the submissive multitudes which Pitt had to deal with. They had become conscious of their rights and they looked to the reform of the government to obtain them.

Hunt was tried on August 27th and released on bail and came to London where he received a most enthusiastic reception from the people. "There was not much waving of handkerchiefs," writes Place, "but there was a good deal of respect at times paid to the man. How in a mass of 300,000 people could it be otherwise? Aye, and he deserved it too, and more than he got. If the people—I mean the working people—are to have but one man, they will, as they ought, support that man at least with their shouts. And there are very many cases, too, in which they would fight with him, or for him. Whose fault is it that no better man goes among the people? Not theirs; they will cling to the best man that makes common cause with them. I remember how I felt when I was a workingman, and know how they feel, and how far they reason. If none shows himself but Hunt, Hunt must be their man."<sup>16</sup>

But the natural leaders of the people, the Whig party, were

<sup>15</sup> Wallas, "Life of Place," p. 143.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

not ready to ally themselves with the people. To be sure, some individuals like Lord Fitzwilliam had been dismissed from his lieutenancy for attending a meeting of protest against the Peterloo massacre, and Lord Tavistock had sent £50 to the Defence Fund; but the great body of Whigs were out of sympathy with the radicals. On November 23d, Parliament met to consider the state of the country and Wilberforce expressed the general feeling when he said that the great body of the thinking part of the people were satisfied with the action of the Manchester magistrates. Tierney, the leader of the Whigs in the House of Commons, expressed himself as satisfied with the sentence passed on Carlile, one of the leaders of the People at Peterloo, and also declared that the Whigs "had ever stood in the front rank against deluded Radicals."

The Parliament which became known later as the Savage Parliament, passed six acts, called Gagging Acts, though opposed by many of the Whigs, but generally endorsed by three-fourths of the Whig party. These acts were against delays in justice, drilling, blasphemy and sedition, disarming, newspaper stamps, every publication of less than two sheets to be subject to a stamp duty, and a prohibition against holding meetings "to examine into grievances in State and Church matters and with the object of preparing petition." These acts were almost as severe as the Pitt and Grenville acts of 1795. Grey opposed this legislation and the spirit of Peterloo, but denounced the radicals. He was willing to lead in parliamentary reform, but deprecated all agitation and was afraid of the excesses of the mob and wrote to a friend at this time about the evil characters of the mob leaders, and that if a convulsion follows from their actions, "I shall not precede you many months on the scaffold, which you will have assisted in preparing for us both."<sup>17</sup>

George III having died in January 1820, a general election followed and Hobhouse and Burdett were put forward as the candidates for Westminster. Hobhouse had been confined in Newgate for two months for breach of privilege in the House of Commons with regard to his statement on the Peterloo massacre, and Burdett had been sentenced to pay a fine of £2,000 and three months' imprisonment for his letter to the Westminster electors written at the time of the Peterloo massacre. But in spite of this, they were both returned from Westminster at the head of the poll, defeating the Whig candidate, Lamb. This victory was due to Place and his friends, whose organisation had

<sup>17</sup> Trevelyan, "Lord Grey of the Reform Bill," p. 189.

restored Westminster to a democratic basis. Place, however, was not satisfied with his representatives in Parliament. Writing in 1826, he says, "As it is, Burdett and Hobhouse are little better than mere drawling Whigs; but the influence of the people in their own affairs was assisted and maintained in 1820, and the fear of the Reformers still remains."<sup>18</sup>

But Place was not discouraged and looked forward with a firm confidence to the ultimate triumph of democracy. He was the one man who understood the practical working of the democratic system and hoped for the extension of the system of Westminster and that of the few open boroughs like Preston in Lancashire to the rest of the country. He recognised that the people could only very slowly be brought up to these ideas and he had great confidence in the people when wisely led. Time was on his side and he foresaw clearly that the forces of the age were on the side of the democracy.

The passing of the commercial crisis, the return of business prosperity, and the decrease of unemployment were followed by a subsidence of political agitation. A truce now ensued for ten years, as there was evidence that the liberal spirit was forcing its way into the ministry. Canning was called to the Foreign Office on the death of Castlereagh and returned to the liberal policy of England in Europe and threw its influence on the side of the forces working for liberalism. Sir Robert Peel entered the Home Office and led the way in the reform of the criminal code, abolishing the death penalty for one hundred offences, such as shop-lifting, picking pockets, and poaching. In conjunction with Huskinson he modified the economic system, simplified the navigation laws, custom tariff, and reduced the duties on corn. But a reform of greater importance was the repeal of the Combination Laws in 1824. This was achieved largely through a campaign organised by Place and carried through by the radical member of the House of Commons, Joseph Hume. In 1823, Hume had moved for a committee of the House to inquire into three laws which prohibited emigration of workmen, exportation of machinery, and associations of workmen. These questions were thoroughly discussed in the committee and it reported favourably to their repeal. Parliament voted for their repeal without seeing the full bearing of their action. Then the workmen, taking advantage of their new liberty, organised strikes and demanded an increase in wages. The manufacturers and ship-owners now combined to demand the

<sup>18</sup> "Life of Place," p. 153.



repeal of the new laws and the question came before Parliament in 1825.

A new Committee of Enquiry was instituted and in view of the crimes charged against the workers of Dublin and Glasgow, it was hoped that the repeal would be carried. Place came to the defence of the men and ultimately succeeded in clearing them from the charges. The result was that the committee reported a compromise measure. This, however, did not destroy the effect of the laws passed in 1824. As Place said: "Ultimately the Act differed very little from Mr. Hume's Act. It is substantially the same. The words 'common law' are omitted, but by the fourth and fifth enacting clauses it is wholly excluded, both in the commencement and close of the clauses; and this being the principal purpose of the Act, the other alterations were of comparatively small moment—but the partial, unjust, and mischievous laws which forbade combinations of workmen to alter their wages and hours of working are all swept away, and the new Act has, by the fourth and fifth clauses, declared combinations for these purposes to be legal."<sup>19</sup>

"The passing of this Act," said Senior, the economist, "had a great moral effect. It confirmed in the minds of the operatives the conviction of the justice of their cause, tardily and reluctantly, but at last fully conceded by the Legislature. That which was morally right in 1824 must have been so, they would reason, for fifty years before."<sup>20</sup>

But another measure which revealed the wave of liberal opinion which was sweeping over the nation was the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829. It was on this issue that Pitt had resigned in 1800 when George III had refused to sanction the repeal of the laws against Catholics at the time of the union of Ireland with England. These laws excluded Catholics from every office and corporation, voting at elections or being elected. While this was the rule for England, yet the right of voting had been conceded to Ireland since 1793. Catholic emancipation had been one of the burning questions for the last thirty years and was made an issue by the Whig party. Grattan in 1813 had raised the question in Parliament, but without success. The Anglican Church, placed in a privileged position by the exclusion of the Catholics, maintained a determined opposition. In 1821 a bill was passed in the House of Commons for emancipation, but rejected by the Lords. The king and the royal house were always

<sup>19</sup> Wallas, "Life of Place," p. 238.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* Quoted. P. 218.

opposed to the repeal, and it seemed impossible to overcome the royal prejudices. Finally, the Catholics becoming weary from the opposition of Parliament, formed themselves into an association, under the leadership of a lawyer named O'Connell. In 1828, the Whigs obtained a vote in the House of Commons repealing the Test Act and the Corporation Act; but the Catholics were still excluded from seats in Parliament by the act passed in 1679; so that while they could hold office after 1828, they could not hold a seat in either House of Parliament. A by-election taking place in Clare County, Ireland, O'Connell contested the seat and was elected. The Irish peasantry, who were on a forty-shilling franchise, rebelled against their landlords and voted for O'Connell. This election immediately created a critical situation.

Ireland was in a state bordering upon civil war, and the Duke of Wellington's ministry, to settle the issue, brought in a Bill of Emancipation and compelled George IV to grant it by a threat of resignation. The act passed the House of Commons by a vote of 348 to 160; but this victory was only won by splitting the Tory party in two and Wellington's ministry was much weakened by the loss of the support of the Tory minority.

The passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act had two marked effects upon the course of events. First, it reunited the Whig party under Earl Grey in the Lords and Lord Althorp in the Commons; and this gave a new impulse to the demand for reform. Both these leaders were advocates of parliamentary reform, and the issue was now coming into the forefront of practical politics. Secondly, the middle class, who had held aloof from the radical agitation of 1817-19, awoke to the need of reform and began to organise their forces to achieve this end.

This awakening of the middle class to the necessity of reform was largely to be credited to a school of thinkers who had broken down the reverence of the people for the Constitution by revealing that its beauties and perfection were a sham; that the Constitution was upheld only as a means of class interests; and that the true ideal of good government was in the happiness of the greatest number. And it was due to these radical thinkers who belonged to the school of Bentham, that public opinion among the middle classes was aroused and became conscious that the evils of the present system could be destroyed only by reform.

Bentham as a young man had issued his first work, "A Fragment on Government," in 1776 and his early manhood had been

spent in writing and criticising the laws of England and in showing that they were survivals of the barbarous ages. He had refused to be swept along in the reactionary current which started with Burke's criticism of the French Revolution, and, through his interpretation, carried the government of Pitt over to a system of repression which threatened to extinguish the liberties of England; but though Bentham had protested against the Rights of Man as propagated by Paine, and treated with scorn the ideas of equality of all men, yet, from his own system, he evolved an idea of government based upon the happiness of the greatest number which was destructive to the obsolete laws which then existed and to the legislative system as upheld by the Tories. Bentham's great interest in political reform began about 1810 and, from this time on, he was the sturdy advocate of a reform of Parliament and the adviser of the practical reformers like Major Cartwright, Francis Place, Henry Brougham, and Francis Burdett. Together with James Mill, and later with his talented son, John S. Mill, and Grote, Bentham instituted a school of thought and criticism which aimed to awaken the middle and intellectual classes to the need of reform. This school struck hard at all monopolies of class and political privilege and held up to ridicule the selfish greed of the oligarchy; and it taught the middle classes that good government rests upon the basis of the sovereignty of the people.

The work of Bentham on legislation and the *Westminster Review*, started in 1824, were the means which educated the middle class and equipped the leaders of the democratic movement which culminated in the Reform Bill of 1832. Before the assaults of these intellectual radicals, the rottenness of the present system was exposed to the eyes of the nation and the strongholds of privilege and class interest went down.

In regard to the radical movement, John Stuart Mill said a few years later, "European reformers have been accustomed to see the numerical majority everywhere depressed, everywhere trampled upon, or at the best overlooked, by governments; nowhere possessing power enough to extort redress of their most positive grievances, provision for their mental culture, or even to prevent themselves from being taxed avowedly for the pecuniary profit of the ruling classes. To see these things, and to seek to put an end to them, by means (among other things) of giving more political power to the majority, constitutes Radicalism; and it is because so many in this age have felt this wish, and have felt that the realisation of it was an object worthy

of men's devoting their lives to it, that such a theory of government as Bentham's has found favour with them."

While the working-class leaders did not enter into the philosophy of radicalism or strive to understand the principles which impelled it onward, yet they gladly accepted the results and united with their new allies. It was the coalescence of these two movements of the middle class and of the working class that swelled into a stream which swept away the barriers of privilege; created the momentum to carry the Reform Bill and to overwhelm the forces of conservatism and power.

Moreover, the depression of trade, the spread of unemployment, and the increasing distress created the economic conditions which turned men's minds to a reform Parliament as a panacea for all social and economic evils. Out of these conditions sprang the Birmingham Political Union which led the way in the movement for reform and organised public opinion to bring pressure to bear upon a corrupt House of Commons.

Thomas Atwood on January 25, 1830, called a town meeting at Birmingham in view of the general depression of trade in that city, "to obtain by every just and legal means such a Reform of the Commons' House of Parliament as may ensure a real and effectual Representation of the lower and middle classes of the People in that House"; and to "collect and organise the peaceful expression of the *Public Opinion*, so as to bring it to act upon the legislative functions in a just, legal, and effectual way."<sup>21</sup>

Many of the leading citizens of Birmingham attended this meeting, and by a thousand to one it passed the following resolution: "That, in the opinion of this meeting, the general distress which now afflicts the country, and which has been severely felt at different periods during the last fifteen years, is entirely to be ascribed to the gross mismanagement of public affairs; and that such mismanagement can only be effectually and permanently remedied by an effectual reform in the Commons' House of Parliament; and this meeting is also of the opinion that for the legal accomplishment of this great object, and for the further redress of public wrongs, it is expedient to form a Political Union between the lower and middle classes of the people of this town."<sup>22</sup>

The meeting also issued a declaration in which attention was called to the corruption of the House of Commons and the danger

<sup>21</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 835, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

to members by the "influence of emoluments drawn from the public purse"; and then it went on to show the close relations between the lower and middle classes in trade. "Everything, in short, combines to render the cause of the industrious classes hopeless in England, unless some measures can be devised for restoring to those important classes that legal influence in the legislative functions which the Constitution has originally placed in their hands. Without this, it is probable that the reward of industry will be permanently destroyed; and that the merchants, manufacturers, farmers, and traders of the United Kingdom will be reduced to a state of general poverty and degradation; whilst the working classes will be driven down in their wages, and deprived of employment generally, until they have no other resource but the over-crowded work-house for their support."<sup>23</sup>

The *Morning Chronicle* of January 27, 1830, called attention on that date to the "bold attempt which had been made at Birmingham to effect an union of the middle and lower classes with a view to bring about a Reform."<sup>24</sup>

Early in February, the Metropolitan Reform Society of workmen discussed the Birmingham Political Union and passed resolutions in sympathy with it. The example of Birmingham was soon followed by many other cities in the kingdom and organisations were formed of a similar character and affiliated with it. These unions became the driving force of the reform movement and united the middle and lower classes in a demand for reform.

Parliament met on February 4th, and the king's speech recognised the prevailing distress and urged its attention upon Parliament. This subject formed the burden of most of the addresses and speeches at that time, both in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons. Earl Stanhope maintained that "the distress was universal in its extent, unprecedented in its degree, intolerable in its pressure; it prevailed in every class and in every interest, it was not temporary." "The country is now rapidly approaching that condition which threatens to tear asunder all the bonds which unite society, every part of the country begins to think for itself and if a remedy be not found, it will lead to the wildest doctrines of Parliamentary Reform."<sup>25</sup>

In this opinion he was not alone; but it was the general feeling that the country was on the verge of bankruptcy. The

<sup>23</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 835, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27, 789, p. 135.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Duke of Wellington acknowledged the general distress<sup>6</sup>, but still held that the country was prosperous. But the Lords had no other remedy for the distress but that of increasing the "protection for the land," that is, as Place says, "They wanted laws to make corn dearer and commodities cheaper."<sup>26</sup>

In the House of Commons, 104 members spoke on the same subject and held that distress was general; the only exception was Sir Robert Peel who acknowledged the distress, but "shewed very clearly that the country was thriving. He was the only man in either House who spoke on the question who understood the matter."<sup>27</sup>

These discussions in Parliament succeeded in alarming the people, in shaking confidence, and in making matters worse. Demagogues succeeded in exciting the people, and politicians increased the unrest by stating that a general break-up was at hand. "Some went so far as to name the month of June beyond which time it would be impossible to go."

Moreover, this discussion of distress in Parliament by both parties and the suggestion of reform as a remedy, was one of the chief causes which brought reform before the people and committed the Whig party to a policy which, when the party came into power later in the year, compelled it to make reform the principle on which the party would take office. Cobbett was not behind the others in increasing the agitation, and he excited the agricultural labourers and workers by pointing out that the one remedy for their present evils was to be found in reform of Parliament.

On May 17th, a meeting of the Birmingham Political Union was held, at which an immense multitude attended, which adopted the Bill of Reform proposed by the Marquis of Blandford. In this bill it was proposed: to dismiss all placemen from the House; to cut off the Rotten Boroughs; to abolish the qualification of the freehold; to repeal the Septennial Act; to break down the expenses of election contests; to give the elective franchise to every householder who was able to pay poor rates. And the Report added that "the Council did not think it prudent to claim universal suffrage, vote by ballot, or annual Parliaments."<sup>28</sup>

But in spite of this support, the bill was not even considered in the House of Commons. The government of Wellington gave no sign that reform was a question within the range of practical

<sup>26</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789, p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27, 789, p. 146.

politics. The newspapers, however, expressed better the tendencies of public opinion. The *Times* and the *Scotsman* published long lists of the pensions and pointed out that £3,000,000 were paid either to the aristocracy or to their dependents. These facts served still further to inflame the minds of the people. There was much misrepresentation of facts, but this did not prevent the truth from getting before the nation. The main fact was that the democratic flood was rising and that it threatened to sweep away the barriers which the aristocracy opposed to its progress. Moreover, the spirit of the times, the trend of events, and the spread of political ideas had reached that stage when the old system was no longer satisfactory to the mind or the spirit of the nation. The Duke of Wellington had made concessions to this new spirit, but had done it only with extreme reluctance. Public opinion was against his government and the weakness of the government was seen by the concessions that it made: first to the Dissenters in repealing the Test Act; then to the Catholics in passing the Emancipation Act; finally to the business interests in reducing taxation; but all were impotent to halt the forward movement or check the democratic spirit. "The Duke of Wellington," writes Place, "was compelled by the spirit of the age to make reforms, which were sure to increase the demand for further reforms"; but he was not conscious where all this might lead. It was only when the democratic movement developed into a demand for reform backed by the voice of the middle and lower classes that the Duke of Wellington and his colleagues awoke to the realisation that they were confronted with a new force and a new people who would no longer suffer the tyranny of the old system.

## CHAPTER VI

### DEMOCRACY WINS ITS FIRST VICTORY: REFORM BILL OF 1832

THE means by which the Reform Bill was passed and the first victory won by the democracy were a surprise both to the opponents and to the advocates of democratic principles. In June 1830, the aristocracy had no conception of the force of the democratic movement or the spirit of enlightenment which had spread among the masses. While they recognised the prevailing distress, they thought it would be removed by strong measures by the government and by passing legislation which would give more protection to the land. They had not the remotest idea that they were face to face with a political crisis which would shake the foundations of their power and change the Constitution. As Place says, "The change which had long been going on in men's opinions was but little noticed and even less understood by our aristocracy than by any other class of the people, and they, therefore, still maintained that a Government of King, Lords, and Commons, checking one another, had been and must continue to be the best possible government. They never seemed to have suspected that when they thus extolled the government, that multitudes of people interpreted these words as meaning a government of the aristocracy with the King at their head, and a salaried House of Commons at their disposal; in fact, a government of an unaccountable aristocracy having a personal interest opposed to the people."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the advocates of democracy, while they knew the change which had taken place in the minds of the working classes and the dissatisfaction of the middle classes with their deprivation from power, yet had no realisation of the distrust of the people and their deep feeling against the government. The forces of tradition, custom, habits, and the natural conservative temper of the British people made a barrier to any extensive reform which could not easily be surmounted. Besides the forces of power and privilege were strongly entrenched and were not likely to surrender their power without a struggle.

<sup>1</sup>Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789. Vol. I, p. 230.



While it was recognised that some reform of Parliament was necessary, the extent of that reform was still very uncertain in the minds of the reformers. This was evident from the fact that when the Reform Bill was published, it went much beyond the wildest hopes of the Reformers and democrats. This fact was due to events which were not within the range of vision in June 1830.

The business depression, the distress of the people, and the political agitation were not greater than that of 1819 and the government showed no more signs of alarm over prevailing conditions than in the previous period. To be sure, the political agitation was more extended, but it was the opinion of careful observers that the distress was not so great as the speakers in Parliament had pictured it. Undoubtedly Parliament was more sensitive to public opinion and to the criticism of the pensions and the use that was made for private ends of a seat in the House of Commons; but the government of the Duke of Wellington was firmly settled in power and if it had produced a very moderate measure of reform, disenfranchised some of the rotten boroughs and transferred their members to the cities of Birmingham and Manchester, these changes would have been received with gratitude by the nation. The democratic movement had not attained that strength that it could demand any larger concessions by the government.

Two events happened which had a profound effect upon the movement for reform and gave to it a momentum which carried along the great middle class in its current and finally swept away the barriers of privilege and power. The first event was less important, but led to an appeal to the people, and in the desire of the Whig party to obtain power, it seized upon the election cry of "reform" and committed their party to the principle of reform from which they could not recede when they obtained power later in the year. This event was the death of George IV, in June 1830, which, of course, necessitated a general election at the beginning of the new reign of William IV. While the election was hailed by the country with satisfaction, it was not entered into enthusiastically by the members of Parliament. The costs of elections had always been very great, and now that a seat in the House of Commons was not as valuable as formerly, owing to the change in public opinion, men were not as eager to stand forth as candidates. On July 27th, the *Morning Chronicle* published an article on corruption in which it said: "The sum to be scrambled for was continually diminishing, while the ex-

penses of elections were continually increasing. During the war when we were expending a hundred millions a year, it was worth while as a speculation to lay out a large sum in an election contest to obtain a share of the contracts. This was the Golden Age—loans and contracts, Jacobin alarms, a strong Government, Bribery and Corruption were all dovetailed into each other. But with peace reckoning, and the race of calculators and economists, Mr. Hume succeeded Mr. Pitt, and figures of arithmetic took the place of figures of speech. The annuitants swallowed the greater part of the revenue, and the borough-holders like the horse-leach may cry, 'Give, give,' but their cry is vain—there is little to give."

In the last election the cost in many boroughs ranged from £10,000 to £60,000. In Yorkshire, the election cost a Mr. Marshall without any contest £30,000. Under these conditions men were not willing to spend thousands of pounds for a seat which might bring them very little return. But the Whig party, which had been out of power for many years, were quite ready to spend money when the prospects of obtaining the government seemed possible under the slogan of reform.

Just as the general election was commencing, an event happened which had a profound effect upon the people of England and the movement for reform. That was the French Revolution of July 26-29, 1830, by which the Bourbon dynasty was expelled from France and a liberal régime under Louis Philippe was established in its place. The effect of this news when it arrived in England was to produce a feeling of "ecstasy" among the people and a sense of consternation and alarm among the aristocracy and ruling classes. All contemporaries bear witness to this feeling and point out that the Revolution created a ferment among the people which gave to the reform movement a different character and aroused popular forces in its support which carried it to victory. "The impression," says Place, "that the events in Paris made on even the least intelligent of the people was such as will never either be effaced or to any extent be forgotten by them; it has already done something towards our political regeneration and will, if need be, do much more."<sup>2</sup>

On the contrary, the effect upon the aristocracy was both disconcerting and disastrous. It shook their faith in the stability of the government and created a fear of the rising of the people, if their demands were refused. It weakened the power of the government; for it revealed the power of the people to overthrow

<sup>2</sup>Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789, Vol. I, p. 163.

the stronghold of despotism and arbitrary power. It also revived the memories of the French Revolution of 1789 and the terror under which their fathers had lived. "Some few among them were pleased at the news, but the great body of them, their relatives and their dependents, either secretly wished or openly expressed their regret that the people of Paris had expelled their murderous oppressors. The people generally were glorified at the result, and their exultation was remarkable for its fervour and its continuance. It was, indeed, of immense importance to this country at the time it happened. Had the people submitted to the ordinances or had they been subdued by the King's troops, the Wellington administration would have been excessively strengthened and would have taken advantage of their own power and the depression of the people and made several strides towards the establishment of arbitrary power in this country." <sup>3</sup>

In the same strain, Greville wrote in his journal, in September 1830, "Nothing can exceed the interest, the excitement, the consternation which prevail here. On Saturday last the funds suddenly fell near three per cent; no cause apparent, a thousand reports, and a panic on the Stock Exchange. At last on Monday it appeared that the Emperor of Russia had, on the first intelligence of the revolution in France, prohibited the tricoloured cockade and ordered all Russian subjects to quit France. As we went down on Saturday, Henry told me that there had been alarming accounts from the manufacturing districts of a disposition to rise on the part of the workmen, which had kept Lord Hill in town; and this I fancied was the cause of the fall, but it was the Russian business." <sup>4</sup>

Under the impulse of the Revolution in France, the tide of democracy began to rise until it reached all classes and swept along in its current men who had heretofore been indifferent to reform and those who had opposed it in the past political agitation. The middle classes who had not as yet been caught in the enthusiasm of the movement for reform which the Birmingham Political Union had started, were swept into the current; the workingmen were stirred with republican ideas and said that "there should be neither King, nor Nobles, nor Established Church and all their public efforts tend towards republicanism thus understood." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> "Journal of the Reigns of George IV and William IV," Vol. II, p. 43.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 27, 789, p. 164.

Even the peasantry felt the effect of the Revolution which gave rise to an excitement, manifested in risings against the landlords and in the burning of farmhouses and cornricks. Roebuck, a radical leader who lived through this period and later obtained eminence in the House of Commons, tells us: "The success of the popular insurrection of Paris exercised a strange and mysterious influence upon the minds of the illiterate, unthinking peasantry of our agricultural counties. Of what had really taken place in that successful outbreak against established authority, these ignorant people knew actually nothing. The rumour reached them of some great change having taken place, a change, as they were told, by which the lowly and the poor were suddenly raised to eminence and power. The rich they heard had been defeated, and that all distinctions in society had ceased to exist. The happy state of which they had so often dreamed and talked, a state in which there were no rich and no poor, in which all were equal, and all equally happy, they fancied had at length arrived; nor did they doubt but that they themselves also might become sharers in this new-found felicity, if they were to put forth their strength and imitate the bright example of the people of France."<sup>6</sup>

In spite of this feeling, the people preserved order and the elections went off quietly in August and no less than 129 new members were returned to Parliament and disposed to assist "in procuring a reform of the House of Commons." The attitude of the people and their orderly conduct was a great disappointment to the aristocracy who had hoped that some disorder might occur which would furnish the government with justification for repeating the part played in 1792; but "the increased intelligence of the people prevented them being deluded with absurd words, and the cry of Jacobin, levellers, and republicans could not now be used to set one class of the people against another class."<sup>7</sup>

In spite of the rotten boroughs, the elections returned a large number of members in favour of some measure of reform. In the great open boroughs of Westminster, Aylesbury, and London, out of 28 members, only 3 were returned for the ministers. In sixty other places which might have contests being more or less open, returning 126 members, only 47 were returned for the government, and out of 236 members, returned by elections more or less popular, the ministers secured only 79 seats. The ministerial majority depended upon closed boroughs of Scotland

<sup>6</sup> Roebuck, "History of Reform Bill," Vol. I, p. 332.

<sup>7</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789, p. 166.

and Ireland. The great Whig families had thrown their influence against the government and they controlled the majority of the boroughs. In the greatest constituency of England at York, Brougham had run as the people's candidate and had been returned with a large majority without the expenditure of any money in the election. This victory, together with his talents as an orator and his advocacy of Reform, placed him at once in the front rank of the House of Commons and made him the centre of the opposition, threatening the ascendancy and leadership of Earl Grey.

During this period, the agricultural disturbances continued and the discontent increased, and the people were anxiously looking to Parliament to propose some plan of relief. As an indication of the trend of popular feeling a dinner was held by the Birmingham Political Union in October, at which 4,000 guests sat down at the table and 6,000 more heard the speeches from the galleries. Toasts were given to the king, to Louis Philippe, and the orchestra played the hymn of the "Marseillaise," which led to an outburst of cheering by the guests. It was clear that the people were in strong sympathy with France and would resent any act of the government which revealed a desire to attack either France or Belgium; for a Revolution had broken out in Brussels in the interest of the independence of Belgium which threatened to disturb the peace of Europe. As Great Britain was closely allied with the despotic governments of the Continent by the peace of 1815, this revolt gave the British Government a pretext for interference in the affairs of Belgium. It raised the possibility of war in Europe and the country was alarmed by the outlook.

Under these circumstances, Parliament met on October 26, 1830, and the king's speech was delivered on November 2d. Seldom was a king's speech listened to with greater interest and with more anxiety. The House of Lords was crowded when the king, William IV, entered and each word was heard with rapt attention. "The clear and distinct enunciation," says a witness of the time, "the high, shrill voice of the King, gave a disagreeable effect to the words as they fell on the ear of the many thoughtful men who listened to these important statements, for those words might be the signal of great and disastrous commotion. Triumph was on the countenances of the ministerial phalanx, and depression visible, in the bearing of the Opposition."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Roebuck, Vol. I, p. 358.

The king's speech contained no reference to reform and produced consternation when he uttered the words, "I have witnessed with deep regret the state of affairs in the Low Countries. I lament that the enlightened administration of the King should not have preserved his dominions from revolt. I am endeavouring in concert with my allies to devise such means of restoring tranquillity as may be compatible with the welfare and good government of the Netherlands and with the future security of other States." When these words were reported the next day in the newspapers, they provoked a storm of criticism; for they clearly implied the determination of the Duke of Wellington's administration to intervene on the side of autocracy against the popular government of Belgium. Earl Grey at once challenged the position of the government and denounced it as a direct censure on the conduct of the people of the Low Countries towards their arbitrary government.

In regard to reform, he brought the issue clearly before the House of Lords when he said, "But, says the noble Lord, you see the hurricane approaching,—the storm is gathering in the horizon. What, then, is to be done? Why, put your house in order—secure your roofs, bar your windows, make fast your doors—and then the storm may drive over you without injury. Admitted, but how is this to be effected? Is it by the mode proposed by the noble Lord? No, it must be by securing the affections of the people—by removing their grievances—by affording redress—in short, (I will venture to pronounce the word), it must be by Reform."<sup>9</sup>

The Duke of Wellington, replying to Earl Grey, pointed out that there was no danger of immediate war with regard to Belgium; then taking up the question of reform, he showed that he was opposed to the idea. He uttered these momentous words which became the landmark in the history of reform and precipitated the crisis which made it the question of the hour: "I will not now enter upon a discussion of this subject, but I will say that I am thoroughly convinced that England possesses at this moment a legislature which answers all the good purposes of a legislature in a higher degree than any scheme of government whatever has been found to answer in any country in the world; that it possesses the confidence of the country—that it deservedly possesses that confidence—and that its decisions have justly the greatest weight and influence with the people. Nay, my Lords, I will go yet further, and say, that if at this moment

<sup>9</sup> Roebuck, Vol. I, p. 365.

I had to form a legislature for any country, particularly for one like this, in the possession of great property of various descriptions, although perhaps, I should not form one precisely such as we have, I would endeavour to produce something which would give the same results."<sup>10</sup>

And he closed with these words: "I therefore am not prepared with any measure of Parliamentary Reform, nor shall any measure of the kind be proposed by the Government as long as I hold my present position."<sup>11</sup>

The duke sat down amid profound silence, and turning to his colleague, Lord Aberdeen, he asked, "I have not said too much?" "You'll hear of it," was the reply.

The same evening in the House of Commons, there was an animated debate and Mr. Brougham raised the issue of reform, disclaiming any radical, sweeping measure revolutionary in character, and stating that "his object in bringing forward this question is not revolution, but restoration, to repair the Constitution, not to pull it down." He gave notice that he would submit the question to the House a fortnight from that date.

The pronouncement of the Duke of Wellington against reform brought on the threatening disturbance and the storm broke. The middle classes were furious and the workingmen began to talk of revolution. There was a great outcry in the press and the demand for the resignation of the ministry.

"The sensation produced in the country," writes Greville, "has not yet been ascertained, but it is sure to be immense. I came to town last night and found the town ringing with his imprudence and everybody expecting that a few days would produce his resignation."<sup>12</sup>

Place was delighted with the duke's speech; for he thought that it would bring the reform agitation to a crisis. Asked by Hume to write out for him his ideas on the subject, he wrote: "A very simple question; there must be a radical change, not a reform; that never was a question with me; there must be a radical change from the top to the bottom, and that, you may, if you like the term better, call a *Revolution*. The whole of our system of Government is essentially corrupt and no corrupt system ever reformed itself. Our system could not reform itself, if it would. Take away the corruption and nothing remains. His

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>11</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 789, Vol. I, p. 175.

<sup>12</sup> Greville, Journals of Reigns of George IV and William IV. Vol. II, pp. 53, 54.

Dukeship and coadjutors know this as well as I do<sup>13</sup>; but they thought the people were still to be cajoled. Catholic Emancipation was to appease them, Repeal of the Taxes on Beer and Leather was to satisfy them. The Duke was ignorant of the change which had taken place, and he mistook his own ignorance for knowledge, but he has made a discovery. He has found that concession goes for nothing while anything remains to be conceded, and he will concede no more. Well done, Brave Duke."<sup>13</sup>

The situation remained critical for two weeks. The Duke of Wellington aggravated the crisis by refusing to allow the king to visit the City of London in state on the Lord Mayor's Day because he feared disorder among the people or a possible riot. The sovereign was popular and there was no danger of his reception being anything but enthusiastic; but there was danger that the presence of the duke would result in a popular outbreak. This refusal, however, had consequences of the most serious character for the ministry. It has been characterised as the "boldest act of cowardice ever perpetrated by a Minister." Place hailed it as the "first step in the British Revolution."

Men were beginning to talk of resistance and Atwood of Birmingham wrote to Place, advocating that men should refuse to pay taxes, if a war against Belgium should be threatened. This was no empty boast; for a year later this plan was seriously considered when the Reform Bill was held up by the House of Lords. Place saw at once that this plan would place in the hands of the Reformers an effective weapon. "If any considerable portion of the housekeepers were to refuse paying taxes and especially, if this were to happen in London, a Revolution would be effected in a week in spite of the Government and the army; if the taxes were refused, it would instantly produce a panic. The Bank of England Notes would no longer be taken and the Government would be powerless."<sup>14</sup>

Events moved rapidly and the pressure of opinion out of doors made itself felt in the House of Commons. The ministry was finally defeated on the Civil List on November 15, 1830, and with its fall, the old régime passed away and the ascendancy of the oligarchy, working through a corrupt House of Commons. Earl Grey immediately took office with "a motley assembly of Whigs, Whig Reformers, and half Tories," and others who were attracted by the emoluments of office. He undertook the ministry on an

<sup>13</sup> Place Manuscripts, No. 27, 1789, Vol. I, p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.



understanding with the king that he should introduce a measure of reform. The question now among the radicals and Reformers was as to the nature of reform and how far it would go; and to ensure its success, they kept up the public agitation so as to bring pressure upon Earl Grey and to prevent him from introducing too moderate a measure to placate the Tories.

In the meantime Lord Melbourne, the Home Secretary, found his hands full in keeping peace in the country. The Political Unions had assumed a more or less revolutionary character and the agricultural districts were aflame with rick-burnings and armed peasants were going about the country committing outrages and terrorising the gentry. Greville tells us of the excitement in the country at this time. "There has been nothing new within these three days, but the alarm is still very great, and the general agitation which pervades men's minds is unlike what I have ever seen. Reform, economy, echoed backwards and forwards, the doubts, the hopes and the fears of those who have anything to lose, the uncertainty of everybody's future, the immense interests at stake, the magnitude and the imminence of the danger, all contribute to produce a nervous excitement; which extends to all classes—to almost every individual."<sup>15</sup>

At the end of December, a friend of Place told him that Earl Grey had said to him, "that whatever proposition for Reform might be made by the ministers, it must be such an one as the House of Commons would entertain," and I observed that if this rule were adopted, nothing but mischief could result from it."<sup>16</sup>

This warning was not lost upon Place, and he set himself to work to stir up a fresh agitation and devoted himself to writing petitions and resolutions for reform of Parliament, and consulting with persons on the subject. Meetings were now held everywhere in the country and all sorts of persons were enlisted in the cause. The Birmingham Political Union had held a large meeting at which vote by ballot had been endorsed and this action was followed by many other unions. People were urged to come forward and declare their views on reform that pressure might be brought to bear upon the government to compel it to introduce a good measure of reform.

At the opening of Parliament on February 3, 1831, Earl Grey had made this statement in regard to the Reform Bill. He said:

<sup>15</sup> Greville, Vol. II, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Place, No. 27, 789, Vol. I, p. 209.

"I was converted at a very early period of my life,<sup>17</sup> and I was now, after giving the subject much consideration, of the same opinion, that very salutary effects would ensue, if a constitutional reform were carried into effect. I had looked to this important question with a view to the adoption of some effectual and efficient measure; and I was happy to say, that although it had for a long time been a work of considerable difficulty, Ministers had at last succeeded in forming a measure which perfectly corresponded with the prayer of one of the petitions,—a measure which would be effective, without exceeding the bounds of a just and well-advised moderation."<sup>17</sup>

This statement did not increase the hopes of the old reformers, and they thought that the Reform Bill when introduced would prove to be a great disappointment. Their hopes were centred in Lord Durham and Lord John Russell, both of whom had been champions of reform for many years and who were members of the committee which drafted the Reform Bill. Lord Durham had been closely allied to the Reformers for some years and "had never broken his word or betrayed his faith towards the people," and as Place says, "they who understood his character relied on him much more than on any other member of the cabinet and with the exception of Brougham, on all the rest of his colleagues taken together."<sup>18</sup>

The government had made a fiasco of its budget and was becoming unpopular. The people were growing impatient and speculating on the character of the Reform Bill. Rumours were afloat as to its nature and extent, but all were wide of the mark. The secret was carefully kept, and when the Reform Bill came before the House of Commons on March 1, 1831, its provisions came as a surprise to every one, and to none more than the members of the House of Commons. When Place was told of the character of the bill, he doubted the accuracy of his reporter. "It was so very much beyond anything which I expected, that, had it been told to me by a person unused to proceedings in the House, I should have supposed that he had made a mistake. Both I and my informant were delighted, and we at once took measures to cause it to be known in the coffee-houses in the neighbourhood whence it spread like wild-fire." There was not less satisfaction and delight when the news was reported by the newspapers the next day. "Next morning the joy of the reformers was excessive, the newspapers were bought in immense numbers and read with

<sup>17</sup> Place, No. 27, 789, Vol. I, p. 242.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

avidity. Everybody seemed well pleased and the exhilaration was very general." <sup>19</sup>

The effect upon the country was not less marked. The speech of Lord John Russell introducing the bill was much praised and "the exaltation of the people scarcely knew any bounds. Great meetings were held in the cities endorsing the bill and many of the cities were illuminated. During the whole of the month of March, meetings multiplied. It was apprehended that the Tories would outvote the ministers in the borough-mongering House of Commons, and consequences, though much disliked, were not at all dreaded as it became evident that the country could never more settle down into the usual quiet habits until a considerable Reform was obtained." <sup>20</sup>

The two features of the Reform Bill which caused the popular enthusiasm were the destruction of the rotten boroughs without compensation and the uniform middle-class franchise, giving votes to householders paying rates of the yearly value of £10 and upwards and at the same time the present electors were not deprived of their privilege, if residents. Two schedules marked the bill: Schedule A, which entirely disfranchised 60 boroughs; and Schedule B, which deprived 47 boroughs of one member; these seats were transferred to the larger cities and towns like Manchester and Birmingham.

The House debated upon the bill for seven nights and it was only carried on the second reading by a majority of one vote. That, of course, foreshadowed the defeat of the bill. This event took place on April 19th, and was brought about by the obstructive tactics of the Tories. There were rumours afloat that the ministry had persuaded the king to prorogue Parliament with a view to an immediate dissolution, but they could not be confirmed. The position of the ministry was such that they had no option save that of resignation or an appeal to the country. The king had been impressed by the arguments of Earl Grey to allow him to make an appeal to the people; for he contended that the bill had been carried on the second reading by a majority of one, and that the opposition did not represent the will of the people. But while the king was impressed, he was not convinced. He wished to avoid the resignation of the ministers, and also the dissolution. On April 19th, the king had written to Earl Grey, "His Majesty had hoped that the necessity of producing more correct returns of the population than those which the census of

<sup>19</sup> Place, No. 27, 789, Vol. I, pp. 267-8.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

1821 affords would, after his Government had carried the principle of the Bill and established the necessity for Reform, have afforded to them a sufficient and very reasonable plea for proposing that the discussion should be postponed until a more opportune period."<sup>21</sup>

The same day in which this letter was written, the government was defeated by two votes and the next day the cabinet recommended to the king a dissolution. The king replied to Earl Grey the same day in a long letter in which he stated his dislike to a dissolution, but his willingness to accede to it because of the critical state of foreign relations and his objection to another change of ministry. At the same time, he added a desire that the Reform Bill might be modified in the interest of conciliation when it was introduced a second time. This statement is important as showing the reluctance of the king and the opposition which Earl Grey had to encounter in carrying the Reform Bill.

"The King cannot close this letter without reminding Earl Grey, that one of his objections to a dissolution was, that, in the present temper of the people, those who should offer themselves for their representatives might be called upon to pledge themselves to the support of proceedings greatly exceeding any measure of Reform contemplated by his Government, or to which the King could have been induced, *under the pressure of any circumstances*, to give his sanction; and His Majesty having waived his general objections, expects that he may rely with confidence upon his Government for most strenuous and firm resistance and opposition to any attempt to introduce and carry measures which would extend the principle of the present Reform Bill, or which should have the effect of impairing the influence and dignity of the Crown, and of curtailing the constitutional rights of the Monarchy." "His Majesty indeed considers that, if the result of a general election should give to his Government a decided preponderance in the House of Commons, advantage should be taken of it, not to re-establish the Bill in its original shape, but to introduce such modifications as, without producing any essential departure from the principle of the measure, shall be calculated to conciliate the opponents of the Bill, and to reconcile the *general* opinion and feeling of the country to it. He considers the framers of the Bill to be pledged to those modifications of it which Earl Grey has stated to his Majesty, in detail, that they were prepared to introduce, and that he was willing to admit."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> "Correspondence of Earl Grey and William IV," Vol. I, p. 220.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 231-2.

While this was the feeling of the king, the Tory opposition were determined to prevent the dissolution by every means. This took the form in the House of Commons of repealing the ordinance supplies already voted on a previous evening. In the House of Lords, Lord Wharncliffe prepared a motion against dissolution as unconstitutional and that it might "have a bad effect upon the Country." When the king heard of this, he felt that an attack was made upon his prerogative and he acceded to the desire of Earl Grey and Brougham to immediately prorogue Parliament. While awaiting the coming of the king, there were scenes of disorder and turbulence in both Houses of Parliament. On the entrance of the king, the disorder ceased, and amid the stillness of the House, there was heard the voice of the king saying, "I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing this Parliament, with a view to immediate dissolution," and he added, "I have been induced to resort to this measure for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of my people."

The general election which followed was one of the most exciting that had ever taken place in England. The people rallied around Earl Grey with the cry, "The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill." Popular feeling rose so high that in many cases the Tories were overawed and intimidated. The Whigs swept the country with the exception of the rotten boroughs. In all the open boroughs their candidates were successful, and in the counties they carried all the seats with the exception of six.

The new Parliament met on June 14th, and the Whigs had a majority of 161 in the House of Commons. The position of Earl Grey was now unique. His Reform Bill had been endorsed by the nation by immense majorities and that in a Parliament elected under the old system of rotten boroughs.

He could now go forward with his measure of reform with the assurance that he had the people behind him and that the bill would be passed and sent up to the House of Lords with a handsome majority. The bill was introduced again on July 6th, and after a series of interminable debates which lasted all summer and obstructive tactics by the Tory opposition, it was finally passed on September 21st by a majority of 109.

The people had been rather impatient during the progress of the bill through the House of Commons and had lost interest in the measure. The workingmen had been indifferent, as they looked upon the bill as a middle-class measure. But interest revived on the passing of the bill in the Commons and public feeling was stirred with the question, "What will the Lords do?" There.

were well-grounded fears that the Lords would reject the bill and this conviction began to stir the revolutionary spirit in the nation. Earl Grey in his speech on October 3rd, in the House of Lords, warned them that in rejecting the Reform Bill they ran a danger of provoking a revolution in the country. Speaking of the unanimity of the people behind the bill, he went on, "Do not, I beg, flatter yourselves that it will be possible by a less effective measure than this to quiet the storm which will rage, and to govern the agitation which will have been produced. . . . And although I do not state, as the noble Duke did on another occasion, that the rejection of the measure would lead to civil war, I trust it will not produce any such effect, yet I see such consequences likely to arise from it as make me tremble for the security of this House and of this country." <sup>23</sup>

He also told the bishops to "put their house in order" and this admonition to the bishops was eagerly seized upon by the people and on the rejection of the bill, made them, in a peculiar degree, the subject of the public anger. The bill was defeated at six o'clock in the morning of October 8th, by 41 votes, and the agitation of which Earl Grey had forewarned the Lords at once broke out. The excitement caused by this vote of the House of Lords was manifested first in London. "In London the shops in many places were closed as a signal of a great public calamity—the funds suddenly fell, and gloom was in the minds of all reasonable men. The great events that had occurred in Paris, in the previous year, were again brought to their recollection, and the dread came with it, that an indignant people might resent the insolent injustice of the House of Lords so roughly as to shake to its foundations the whole fabric of the English Constitution." <sup>24</sup>

Recognising that even a deeper feeling would be manifested in the provinces, Lord Ebrington moved a vote of confidence in the ministers and it was carried by a large majority. The immediate object of the motion was to show the king that he could not dismiss the ministers in whom the House had confidence and was to reveal to the public that the Reform Bill would still be continued by the government. The feeling in the provinces, however, was not less than that manifested in London. The popular indignation expressed itself in huge meetings held in Manchester and Birmingham. There Atwood, chairman of the Political Union, organised a public meeting at which 150,000 persons were present and they passed resolutions thanking Lords Althorp and John

<sup>23</sup> Roebuck, "History of Reform Bill," Vol. II, pp. 207-8.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

Russell for their conduct in passing the bill through the House of Commons; and Lord John Russell in reply had written to Atwood, "It is impossible that the whisper of a faction should prevail against the voice of the nation." This statement had solidified the middle class in favour of reform; for it assured them that the great families of the Whig aristocracy had determined "to stand to the hazard of the die" in the cause of reform. This indiscretion of Lord John Russell in writing thus to an organisation which was pledged to reform or revolution was severely censured by the Tories as a minister of the crown fomenting revolution.

The workingmen who had been rather indifferent to reform blazed up in indignation when the news arrived that the bill had been rejected by the Lords. They turned out in large numbers at the meetings held in Manchester and Birmingham. The union between the middle class and the workingmen was now complete. Three days after the rejection of the bill, Parkes wrote from Birmingham to Grote, the historian, "I have been written to by the Government to-day. They are still the same men, not suited to the occasion. I do fear their going out. We have all written up to them, 'Peers or Revolution!—All the cards are ours, and the whole nation deserves to stand before the world in a pillory if we are swindled. I only fear a compromise.'" <sup>25</sup>

On the same day, Place had written to Hobhouse telling him that it was no time for "patience" and that the time had come for action. "I have stood up firmly against proceedings which had a tendency to produce a panic. Others of my friends have done the same, and our success was perfect until yesterday afternoon, when at the close of the meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern many persons avowed their determination to withdraw their balances from the bankers in gold." <sup>26</sup>

But the crisis produced new troubles for Place; for the workingmen of London had broken away from the middle-class leadership and were proposing revolutionary action. The leaders of this new working-class movement had for some time been under the influence of socialist writers like Owen and Hodgskin and had accepted their doctrines as part of the democratic system. There were among these leaders the men who afterwards conducted the Chartist movement, Lovett, Cleaves, Hetherton, and Warden. They met at the Rotunda and indulged in wild and revolutionary discussions, claiming that they spoke for the workingmen of

<sup>25</sup> "Life of Francis Place," p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

London. Place who saw the necessity for keeping the alliance between the middle class, the workingmen, and the Whig cabinet, bent all his energies to hold in check the workmen at the Roundabout.

A huge procession in favour of reform was organised in October and proved a great success. In October 13th, the *Morning Chronicle* printed an article hinting at a compromise with the Lords and a modified bill. At this news, Place went down to the Crown and Anchor Tavern and spoke of the intentions of the ministers and drew up a memorial stating that if the bill was not introduced at the shortest possible moment, "this country will inevitably be plunged into all the horrors of violent revolution," and a deputation was appointed to wait upon Earl Grey. They arrived at a quarter to eleven at night and Earl Grey told them "that it would be absurd to propose a measure which they could not carry through"; that a new bill would be prepared "not less efficient than the old; that this would take much time and consideration," and that all disturbances would be put down with military force. This interview gave place to an angry controversy, and Greville sneered a month later at "the domiciliary visit of Place and his rabble."<sup>27</sup>

The king was much disturbed by these demonstrations and urged the ministers to modify the Reform Bill to meet the views of the House of Lords. The spirit of compromise was in the air and the ministry entered into negotiations with the leaders of the opposition and tried to come to some understanding. Parliament was prorogued on October 20th, and no time was fixed for the next session. In the meantime, riots had occurred in various parts of the kingdom, and Bristol was in the hands of a mob for three days and parts of the city were sacked and burned. The castle of the Duke of Newcastle, who was unpopular through his opposition to the bill, had been assailed and burned; and "in every part of the kingdom resistance to the Government by a refusal to pay taxes was now openly talked of."<sup>28</sup>

Earl Grey's plan of remodelling the bill and removing the features objectionable to the Tories, broke down under the pressure of public opinion, and Parliament was called to reassemble on December 6th, for the consideration of the Reform Bill. After the calling of Parliament, "the people became calm, and agitation in most places ceased."

The new bill was found to be as good as the first, and the

<sup>27</sup> Greville, Vol. II, p. 213.

<sup>28</sup> Roebuck, Vol. II, p. 221.



public, realising that everything was going satisfactorily, settled down in quietness, and a spirit of apathy and indifference seemed to have possessed the people. This, however, was only on the surface. Beneath the apparent indifference, there existed a deep under-current of feeling and passion, ready to break forth at the first sign that the safety of the bill was threatened.

"The popular excitement," says Roebuck, "had never for one moment flagged. In spite of reiterated assertions by the enemies of reform, that the interest taken by the country in the ministerial proposal had seriously declined, that interest had hourly increased, and the temper of the nation alone had changed. The nation—that is, an immense majority of the wealthy, intelligent, and instructed, as well as the poor and laborious millions, called the working class—had now resolved to have the Reform Bill,—they had resolved also to have it by peaceful means, if possible, but if that were not possible, by force."<sup>29</sup>

The bill had been passed by the House of Commons on March 19th by a majority of 116 and had been introduced into the House of Lords on the 26th. The interest now centred upon the attitude of the Lords, and it was hoped that they would give the bill a favourable consideration and not force the nation to revolutionary action. In this hope the people were led by the moderating spirit and conciliatory attitude of a group of peers under the leadership of Lords Wharncliffe and Harrowby.

In these efforts they were seconded by the king, with the result that the House of Lords accepted the bill in principle on the second reading by a majority of nine. In the committee stage, the tactics of the opposition, who conceded that some reform was necessary, was to defeat the bill by modifying its vital provisions and then to bring in a bill of their own with a much more limited plan of reform. Under the plea of protecting the franchise, Lord Lyndhurst proposed to postpone the consideration of the boroughs in Schedule A. "'Begin,' he said, 'by enfranchising, begin by conferring rights and privileges, by granting boons and favours. The noble Earl, however, proposes to begin by disfranchising, to begin by depriving a portion of the community of the rights and privileges which they at present enjoy.'"<sup>30</sup>

Earl Grey dissented from this, and said if the amendment was carried he would be forced to consider what action he would take. The amendment was carried after an angry debate by a majority of 35 and Earl Grey at once arose and said that "the

<sup>29</sup> Roebuck, "History of Reform Bill," Vol. II, p. 259.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

chairman should report progress, and asked leave to sit again on Thursday (May 10th)."

The ministry had now only two courses open to them, either to resign or to ask the king to create peers. This latter step the king refused to take and immediately the ministers resigned. On Wednesday, May 9th, the resignation of the ministers and the king's acceptance were formally announced by Earl Grey in the House of Lords and by Lord Althorp in the House of Commons. Then the king sent for Lord Lyndhurst and asked him to form a ministry. He appealed to the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. Peel refused to have any part in the ministry; but the Duke of Wellington from a sense of duty accepted the proposal with the idea of carrying a very limited measure of reform, though he thought it both unwise and unnecessary.

When the news of the action of the House of Lords in defeating the bill and of the fact that the king had asked the Duke of Wellington to form a ministry reached the public, an explosion of popular wrath broke out. A wave of revolutionary insurrection swept the country. London, Manchester, Birmingham, and other large towns were in commotion. On Friday, May 11th, a deputation came to London from Birmingham, pledging the Birmingham Political Union to a rising. "Between eight and nine o'clock on the morning of the 11th," writes Place, "I received a note from Mr. Parkes, saying that a spontaneous meeting of 100,000 persons had been held at Birmingham on the preceding afternoon at Newhall Hill; that expresses had been sent to all the London morning newspapers with an account of the proceedings, each of which would have a notice inserted. The people of Birmingham had determined not to pay taxes—to arm themselves. A deputation consisting of himself and others had arrived in London with a petition to the Commons, to be presented in the evening. They would be with me at ten o'clock. They intended being present at the Westminster meeting and at the Common Hall in the city of London, and to call upon the people of London to stand fast by them. All Birmingham had joined the Union."<sup>21</sup>

The next day, May 12th, there was a secret council of deputies, among which were noted many men of wealth and position and the council determined that open resistance should be followed if the Duke of Wellington succeeded in forming a ministry. In the meantime everything should be done to prevent an administration by the duke. If a rising took place, it was decided that

<sup>21</sup> Wallas, "Life of Place," p. 299.

London should make a demonstration which would hold the seven thousand troops near the metropolis and leave Birmingham and the other cities of the provinces to organise the revolt. As London was the centre of credit with the Bank of England, it was determined to strike at the financial system and create a general run upon the banks. "There was a general conviction," says Place, "that if the Duke succeeded in forming an administration, that circumstance alone would produce a general panic, and almost instantaneously close all the banks, put a stop to the circulation of Bank of England notes, and compel the Bank to close its doors; and thus at once produce a revolution.

"Mr. Parkes caught up the idea and wrote these words for a placard: 'We must stop the Duke.' I, therefore, took a large sheet of paper and wrote

To stop the Duke

Go for

Gold.

"All present said, 'That will do; no more words are necessary.'"<sup>32</sup> In four hours bill-stickers were at work pasting the placard and other persons distributing it. Parcels were sent down to the provinces and requesting the people to reprint them and use postbills and handbills. On Monday 14th the *Evening Standard* denounced the placard and attributed it to Grote. Grote wrote to Place about it and he replied, "Here is the answer to your note of yesterday. Just at the time when the *Standard* published your letter containing your—what?—oh! arguments to prove that 'Go for gold' was no go at all, in came a great man, who seeing the placard on my table pointed to it and exclaimed, 'That is the settler; that has finished it.' This he said without hesitation before a gentleman whom he had never before seen. When the gentleman was gone, he told me that the placard and some other such matters had worked the reformation. Earl Grey was gone to the King."<sup>33</sup>

That evening Earl Grey made a guarded statement in the House of Lords and moved an adjournment until Thursday, the 17th. In the Commons, Baring, speaking for the Tories, announced that "the communications with the Duke of Wellington for the formation of a new ministry are entirely at an end." On the 18th, Earl Grey stated that "in consequence of my seeing now that grounds of confidence exist to enable me to redeem the pledges which I gave your Lordships and the country, of not

<sup>32</sup> "Life of Place," p. 309.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

continuing the administration unless I had a confident security of passing the Reform Bill on the table unimpaired in its principles and in all its details,—and having received from the Sovereign his most gracious commands expressed to that effect, his Majesty's present ministers continue in their places."

This announcement was followed by a violent outbreak in the House of Lords, and Lord Harwood said, "If he must choose between two evils,—the Reform Bill or the creation of Peers,—he would choose the first, because he considered the latter a greater calamity than the Reform Bill itself." The Tory peers tried to obtain from Earl Grey a statement as to whether the king had given a pledge for the creation of peers; but without success. The king was using his utmost endeavour to avoid making new peers and was trying to persuade the lords who opposed the bill to remain away from the House; but it was known later that the king, frightened by the danger of a popular uprising, had reluctantly conceded the demand of the cabinet and given a formal pledge to create sufficient peers as might be necessary to pass the bill. This, however, did not become necessary, as the Tory lords withdrew from the House and allowed the bill to pass. The bill was read for the third time in the House of Lords on June 4th and carried by a vote of 106 to 22; it was then sent down to the House of Commons, and the next day, Lord John Russell moved that the Commons concur with the Lords in the minor changes made in the bill, and, after a long debate, the Reform Bill was passed and received the royal assent on June 7th, 1832.

Thus ended the long struggle covering two years, a struggle in which the forces of democracy waged a bitter battle with the forces of reaction and aristocracy. This triumph of the people was brought about by the threat of revolution. While in the earlier stages of the Reform Bill, the talk of revolution may have had no special significance, yet in the last month of the struggle, revolution and civil war were on the verge of breaking out. There was no doubt that if the Duke of Wellington had succeeded in forming an administration, the government would have been face to face with a nation in arms. The middle-class leaders were not anxious for such a conflict, and nothing but dire necessity would have forced them to appeal to the sword. In the midst of the popular excitement, they were careful to keep their acts within the legal limits of the law. Their first appeal was to the pressure of credit and finance and they hoped by drawing gold from the banks, they could bring the opposition to sub-

mission. If that had failed to keep the Duke of Wellington out of office, they would have resorted to paying no taxes. But they were fearful at the time that the working classes whom they had enlisted in their cause would get beyond control; they realised that if fighting had been started between the people and the government, and barricades erected, that the throne itself as well as the aristocracy would have gone down in ruins. From this the nation was saved by the common sense of the aristocracy which at the last moment gave way, to be sure, under pressure, and allowed the bill to pass.

The Reform Bill of 1832 was not a distinct victory for the democracy; for the measure only increased the electorate by 500,000 and left the workingmen without the franchise. Though it gave the vote to the middle class who came within the £10 household rates, it left many of the middle class, the sons of householders, the clerks and others without the vote. But it was by means of the democracy and the support of the working class that the victory was finally gained. Without their support, the middle class would have been too weak to overcome the forces of tradition, power, and privilege. The workingmen supported the bill because they realised that it was a step in the direction of democracy and universal suffrage and that if the Reform Bill was carried, the new Parliament, they hoped, would be led to take the next step and to extend the franchise to all the people. In this they were disappointed, and it was this disappointment which led to the organisation of the Chartist movement and the new struggle of the democracy for power.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER: A LANDMARK IN THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

THE passing of the Reform Bill of 1832 did not check the democratic movement. The claim of Earl Grey and the Whigs that the bill was a final settlement of reform was destined soon to be discredited. A section of the workingmen had questioned the advantages of the Reform Bill even when it was passing through its last stages in the House of Lords and they had denounced it as a middle-class measure. The *Poor Man's Guardian* had published in March 1832, an article in which it said: "The Bill is the most illiberal, the most tyrannical, the most abominable, the most infamous, the most hellish measure that ever could or can be proposed—I therefore conjure you to prepare your coffins, if you have the means. You will be starved to death by thousands if this Bill passes, and thrown on the dunghill or on the ground like naked dogs."<sup>1</sup>

These criticisms were drawn forth by the imprisonment at that time of many of the working-class leaders in London and Manchester and the workers despaired of the Whig Ministry doing anything for the benefit of the working classes. The hopes which had been raised in their minds by the great demonstrations in favour of reform were destined to be shattered and a short session of the Reformed Parliament was sufficient to open the eyes of the working class and to turn their thought again along the lines of political agitation. Earl Grey had always contended with the king that the bill was an aristocratic measure and that it would not result in the evils which the frightened imaginations of the Tories had conjectured.

In the first application of the bill in the elections for a reformed Parliament, there had been much agitation and some radicals talked wildly about the abolition of the House of Lords; but when Parliament met, the tumultuous members were soon brought under party discipline and the Whig Ministry introduced moderate measures of reform like the Poor Law and the

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Place," p. 290.

Municipal Organisation. The House of Lords soon recognised that they still retained much of their power and modified the Municipal Act in the conservative interest. They rejected a bill on Church Tithes and mutilated other reform measures. The efforts of the Duke of Wellington were directed to tactics which would put the Whigs and radicals at loggerheads and "the radicals were now very angry with the Whigs, who they thought, had deserted the principles they professed."<sup>2</sup>

The Reform Bill in its practical working was soon found not to be detrimental to the interests of the land-owning classes and with the manufacturers of the middle class. While it had destroyed the rotten boroughs and extended the franchise to the large cities, yet it still left the landed gentry as the governing class until 1846 and as exercising a dominant interest until 1867. John Bright used to say of the Reform Bill of 1832, "The workmen are almost universally excluded, roughly and insolently, from political power, and the middle class, whilst they have the semblance of it, are defrauded of the reality."<sup>3</sup>

Place had no illusions as to the nature of the Reform Bill and regarded it as but a step in the movement of democracy. He wrote shortly after the Reform Parliament was in session: "The Reform Bills are in themselves of little value, but as a commencement of the breaking up of the old rotten system they are invaluable."<sup>4</sup>

At first he gave his support to the Whig Ministry and did everything possible to further among his friends the measures of the Reform Parliament; for he felt that each measure would be a further step towards the spirit of liberalism. He held that time was on their side and that "time will have quietly sent a large number of old prejudiced aristocrats to the grave, and substituted for them the young, energetic fellows, brought up very generally without reverence for authority, and imbued with notions of representative government."<sup>5</sup>

But while Place in 1834 was looking at the future of the democratic movement with philosophic calm, he was rudely awakened from his dream by the sudden dismissal of the government of Melbourne by the king and the formation of a Tory Ministry under the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. As the new administration was in a minority in the House of Commons, a

<sup>2</sup> Greville, Vol. III, p. 151.

<sup>3</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of Bright," p. 365.

<sup>4</sup> "Life of Place," p. 326.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335.

general election followed. The circumstances under which the Whig Ministry had resigned and the arbitrary action of the king served to stir up again all the passions of the people and the elections were contested with much bitterness and acrimony. The Duke of Wellington was still disliked by the people and the aristocracy were assailed by the Whigs and radicals alike. "The people are deaf with passion," quotes Greville, "and in the abrupt dissolution of the late Government and the bad composition of this they will see a conspiracy against their liberties, and mad and preposterous as the idea is, there is no eradicating it from their brains."

And he adds, "I am afraid this is too true, and though not an alarmist generally, and rather sluggish of fear, I do begin to tremble." A few days later he wrote, "the rabid spirit of disaffection to the government and rule bears down every other consideration, and these 'enlightened electors' (as their flatterers always call them) are frantic with passion against everything belonging to what they call 'the aristocracy' of the country. But who can wonder at these people, when we see the great Whig Lords smiling complacently at their brutal violence and senseless rage." <sup>6</sup>

At first the elections were in favour of the Whigs and radicals and they carried London and Hume was elected from Middlesex; but the Tories succeeded in carrying many counties and many of the seats in the industrial centres so that the elections resulted in a nearly equal balance of parties. It was now evident that the Whigs could only come into power by an alliance with the radicals and with this combination they elected the Speaker of the House of Commons by a close vote of 316 to 306. A few days later Peel was defeated by 321 votes to 289 and resigned, and Lord Melbourne accepted office again with Lord John Russell as leader of the House of Commons. The closeness of the vote sealed the alliance of the Whigs and the radicals whose zeal for reform was moderated by the desire to retain office; for if they overthrew the ministry, they would be faced by a Tory administration. So the radicals avoided any action which would embarrass the government and gave up the assertion of democratic principles in the House. Place complains of this as tending to discourage the democratic movement in the country.

These conditions were brought about by a reaction which had set in, due to disappointment with the results of the Reform Parliament; and this reaction led to the rehabilitation of the Tory

<sup>6</sup> Greville, Vol. III, pp. 188, 192.



party in the country. When the working classes found that they could expect nothing from Parliament, they ceased their political agitation and turned their energies to social and economic reform. Owen with his co-operative schemes obtained the ear of the leaders and won them over to an organisation of workmen whose aims would be to raise wages, shorten hours of labour, and improve the working conditions. There was a business depression in 1833 and it helped on the movement. It started in Lancashire among the labour organisations and grew with great rapidity and soon spread to unorganised labour. The *Pioneer*, first published in September 1833, was purely a trades union paper, but it was taken over by Owen, and edited as a journal attacking employers and its circulation increased to 30,000 copies. It advocated co-operative stores, manufacturing, and made socialist ideas popular with the working classes. Under the influence of these teachings, the workers organised, in the beginning of 1834, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union which had a membership of 500,000. The union now undertook to finance strikes for higher wages. There was soon an epidemic of strikes and they followed in such rapid succession that the union was unable to finance its members and the strikes failed. As the tax per member had been continually increasing with new strikes, the unions became unpopular and gradually disappeared.

In August 1834, Owen quarrelled with Morison, the editor of the *Pioneer*, and later with Smith, the labour leader who had been active in organising the union. Then Owen, realising that the union could not endure, reorganised his disciples into the society for the propagation of his ideas under the name of the British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity and Knowledge. After this, the workers grew discouraged and the strikers returned to their work; but they had learned their lesson that no improvement could be obtained by social agitation alone. Being powerless to contend against their masters who were associated with the Whig party, they turned their sympathies to the Tories and in the general election which ensued the next year, they were opposed to the Whigs. There is no doubt that the victories which the Tories obtained at the polls in Lancashire and the counties were influenced by the antagonism awakened in the workmen towards their middle-class masters in the strikes of the preceding year.

The idea now began to revive that it was only by political agitation that the working classes could hope for a betterment of their social condition, and an improvement in wages and hours

of labour. The lessons of the struggle for the Reform Bill had not been lost. The working classes had learned at that time that Parliament would only give way under the pressure of an insistent demand by the people. An incident occurred which served to antagonise the workmen with the government. During the strike struggles of the previous year, six labourers from Dorchester had been arrested by the government and sentenced to seven years' transportation for administering illegal oaths. This severe sentence roused the ire of the London workingmen and they organised a huge procession which marched to the Home Office to protest in favour of the convicted labourers. Place guided the movement and wisely prevented the demonstration from going beyond the legal limits of petition. He wrote to the government urging it to leave the people alone, and then they would quietly disperse at the end of the day. This advice was followed and everything passed off quietly; but unfortunately the government paid little attention to the demand to relieve the prisoners and left a spirit of rankling in the minds of the trade unionists. "Had the sentence," said Place, "been passed on the Dorchester labourers and then remitted, had a proclamation been issued declaring the law, and the determination to enforce it, been made, an end would have been put to all unions. But the fact is, and it is useless to conceal it, our Ministers have no energy in any case except against the common people." <sup>7</sup>

The effect of this disposition by the government was soon to make itself felt. Lovett, one of the ablest of the workingmen's leaders and an adherent of the teachings of Owen, organised a Workingmen's Association in London as the nucleus of a Labour party in 1836. This association met once a week and discussed such questions as "Will Free Trade reduce wages," and at these gatherings the views of Owen, communism, and the socialism identified later with the teachings of Marx were set forth. Lovett's idea was that a betterment of the people could only be obtained by political power.

The association addressed an appeal to the workingmen of the nation in which it said, "There is at present a contest between the two great parties both in and out of Parliament—between the agricultural and privileged classes on the one hand and the moneyed and commercial classes on the other. We have little to expect from either of them. There are persons among the moneyed classes who, to deceive their fellow-men, have put on a

<sup>7</sup>"Life of Place," p. 357.

cloak of reform; many boast of freedom while they help to enslave us, preach justice, while they help to oppress us. Many are for step-by-step improvement, lest we should see our political degradation too soon, and make an advance towards depriving them of their privileges. . . . Working Men! enquire into this matter, and if you feel with us, stand apart from all projects and refuse to be the tool of any party that will not, as a first essential measure, give to the workmen equal political and social rights so that you may be able to elect men of your own who will take care that the interests of the working classes, 'who are the foundation of the social edifice,' shall not be sacrificed. . . . There are in the United Kingdom 6,023,752 males over 21 years of age, only 840,000 have a vote, and owing to the unequal state of the representation about one-fifth of that number have the power of returning a majority of members."<sup>8</sup>

The idea of the association extended its ramifications throughout the industrial centres; and especially in Manchester, the workmen followed the example of London. By the beginning of 1837, the idea of forming a political party to obtain the workmen's demands crystallised in a political programme which became known as the Charter. This was the result of a meeting held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, February 1837, attended by about 3,000 of the workingmen of London under the leadership of Lovett, Hetherington, and Vincent. At this meeting, Hartwell took the chair and made a speech in which he said, "The greatest danger for the workmen is to remain attached to so-called political leadership of the men of culture and wealth. We need democracy, political and social rights for the producing millions. . . . How can we emancipate ourselves from this state of political bondage? Not by pandering to the fears of that timid and irresolute class of politicians who have lately appeared among the Radical ranks, not by relying on the dastardly Whigs, not by placing faith in the tyrannical Tories, but by a full reliance on our own strength—upon the inherent justice of our claims."<sup>9</sup>

The following resolution, proposed by Lovett, was adopted: "This meeting is of opinion that so long as political power is vested exclusively in the few, will they seek to perpetuate their power and to render the multitude subservient to their purposes; they will continue to make them machines and instruments of production, toiling from youth to old age to procure a scanty

<sup>8</sup> "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

portion of food and clothing, and having neither time to cultivate their mental powers nor means of enjoying rational comforts." <sup>10</sup>

They also adopted the petition to Parliament in which were embodied the six points: Universal suffrage, the ballot, payment of members, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, and abolition of property qualification for Parliament. The radicals in the House of Commons approached the association and at a meeting where 13 members attended and sixty members of the association, eleven members signed the six points and a committee was appointed to draft a bill to be known as the People's Charter.

The London Workingmen's Association sent out Henry Vincent and John Cleaves to enlist the workingmen in the provinces and to organise them into associations. They conducted a vigorous campaign and were received with enthusiasm by the working classes in the northern counties and in the Midlands. In the meantime the accession of Queen Victoria and the general election which followed had a marked influence on the democratic movement. The election was disastrous to the radicals and the Whigs returned to power with little sympathy with radical principles. In the queen's speech there was no reference to the franchise and a radical member moved an amendment that it was to be regretted that no mention was made to the franchise or other parliamentary reforms. Lord John Russell, replying for the government, stated that agitation for further parliamentary reform would receive no support by the government. That the Reform Bill of 1832 represented the limits of the reform; that they regarded the bill as a "final settlement." This at once produced an outburst of criticism from the radicals and stirred up the Workingmen's Associations to renewed activity. In November, O'Connor issued the first number of the *Northern Star* advocating the principles of the Charter and roused the northern counties to enthusiasm for the principles of democracy.

In December 1837, Atwood revived the Birmingham Political Union, but on new lines supported by the working classes and endorsing five points of the Charter. Atwood did not believe in equal electoral districts and refused to endorse this principle of the Charter. He was more interested in paper currency and looked upon this as the panacea for the present business depression and the solution of the problem of unemployment which was very extensive at this time in Birmingham and the Midlands. However, the union enlisted a large number of the

<sup>10</sup> "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 27.

workers and its plan was copied in other towns and cities. In May 1838, the People's Charter was published. This was largely the work of Lovett, but its form was modified by Place and put into a more acceptable shape. Place claimed that he drew "the skeleton of the Bill under appropriate heads, sent it to Mr. Lovett for Mr. Roebuck to complete."<sup>11</sup> Roebuck drew up the preamble and Lovett wrote most of the Charter so that it has been justly claimed as his work.

With the publication of the Charter, Lovett issued a manifesto in the name of the Workingmen's Association of London to the Radical Reformers of Great Britain and Ireland. At its close, he said, "The object we contemplate in the drawing up of this Bill is to cause the Radicals of the kingdom to form, if possible, a concentration of their principles in a practical form, upon which they could be brought to unite, and to which they might point, as a Charter they determined to obtain. . . . We hope that electors and non-electors will continue to make it the pledge of their candidates; will seek to extend its circulation, talk over its principles, and resolve that, as public opinion forced the Whig Reform Bill, so in like manner shall this Bill eventually become the law of England."<sup>12</sup>

The movement now began to make headway and the Charter was adopted by large bodies of workingmen. It marked the beginning of a genuine democratic movement which was destined ultimately to triumph in the Reform Bill of 1867; but at the moment it was a means of educating the workers in the principles of democracy and preparing the way for their triumph. Place wrote enthusiastically of the movement and believed that ultimately it would prove a great step in advance by teaching the workingmen how to combine to attain a reform of the franchise. "This is the first time," he writes, "that the desire for reform has been moved by them (the working people) and carried upwards. Until now it has always proceeded downwards, and expired when abandoned, as it has always been, by their gentlemen leaders. It will not again expire, but will go on continually, sometimes with more, sometimes with less, rapidity, but on it will go."<sup>13</sup>

Place, with his prophetic vision of the future born of his long experience of forty years of political agitation, recognised that democracy based upon universal suffrage would ultimately tri-

<sup>11</sup> "Life of Place," p. 367.

<sup>12</sup> "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 31.

<sup>13</sup> "Life of Place," p. 368.

umph; but he was not deceived as to its immediate future. He foresaw that it would encounter much opposition and that the delay in achieving their ends would lead to discouragement among the workers; but in the end they would learn the limitation of their powers and effect a better form of organisation. He was not over-sanguine in regard to the result of the People's Charter in the present attitude of Parliament and the opposition of the upper classes; but he held that it was a step in the right direction. In the beginning, he obtained a promise from the London Workingmen's Association that they would refrain in their speeches from all references to the new Poor Law and the discussion of socialism upon their platforms; but the movement soon got beyond control and was dominated by O'Connor and the left wing of the party which advocated carrying the Charter by revolutionary action and physical force, if the petition of the people was refused by Parliament. The petition was prepared in February 1839, and had received 1,280,000 signatures. It expressed the feelings of the people over their social conditions which were much aggravated at the time by the business depression. These conditions had been referred to by the extreme men of the Chartist movement to inflame the minds of the people and to urge them to violence and insurrection, and they had succeeded in stirring the masses to a high pitch of excitement which needed but the word to set in motion the forces of revolution. But fortunately there were many among the leaders, men like Lovett, and the leaders of the London Workingmen's Association, who counselled moderation and hoped some beneficial results would come from the petition to Parliament. This petition read in part as follows: "We are bowed down under a load of taxes; which, notwithstanding, falls greatly short of the wants of our rulers; our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy; our workmen are starving; capital brings no profit and labour no remuneration; the home of the artificer is desolate, and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full; the workhouse is crowded and the manufactory is deserted. We have looked on every side. We have searched diligently in order to find out the causes of a distress, so sore and so long continued. We can find none in nature, or in Providence. . . .

"The good of a party has been advanced to the sacrifice of the good of the nation; the few have governed for the interests of the few; while the interests of the many have been neglected or insolently and tyrannously trampled upon.

"It was the fond expectation of the people that a remedy for

the greater part, if not for the whole, of their grievances would be found in the Reform Act of 1832. They were taught to regard that act as a wise means to a worthy end; as the machinery of an improved legislation, when the will of the masses would be at length potential. They have been bitterly and basely deceived. The fruit which looked so fair to the eye has turned to dust and ashes when gathered. The Reform Act has effected a transfer of power from one dominating faction to another, and left the people as helpless as before.

"Our slavery has been exchanged for an apprenticeship of liberty, which has aggravated the painful feeling of our social degradation by adding to it the sickening of still deferred hope.

"We come before your honourable House to tell you, in all humility, that this state of things must not be permitted to continue; that it cannot long continue without very seriously endangering the stability of the throne and the peace of the kingdom; and if by God's help and all lawful and constitutional appliances, an end can be put to it, we are fully resolved that it shall speedily come to an end. That the good of the many as it is the only legitimate end, so it must be made the sole study of the government." "We perform the duties of free men; we must have the privileges of free men!

"We demand: Universal suffrage, the ballot, Annual Parliaments, payment of Members, and abolition of property qualification."<sup>14</sup>

A convention of 53 delegates from the Workingmen's Associations of Great Britain was held in London on February 4, 1839, to forward the work of the petition through Parliament and to decide upon the policy to be pursued if the House of Commons should reject the petition. The incitement to violence and revolution of the people in the northern counties by the speeches of O'Connor, Taylor, and Stephens had produced a division in the ranks of the Chartists. The Birmingham Political Union had protested against this violence and had been supported in this protest by the associations of Glasgow and London. They desired to follow only legal and constitutional methods to attain their ends and deprecated the rashness and violent spirit of the northern leaders. These divergent views at once manifested themselves on the meeting of the convention. It was not long before differences arose which divided the convention into two camps; those in favour of revolutionary action, and those who

<sup>14</sup> Postgate, "Revolutions, 1789-1906," p. 127ff.

believed in carrying their measure by legal means and the pressure of public meetings and petition.

On February 5th, Parliament met and the queen's speech contained this reference to the disturbed conditions among the people: "I have observed with pain the persevering efforts which have been made in some parts of the country to excite my subjects to disobedience and resistance to the law, and to recommend dangerous and illegal practices."<sup>15</sup>

This was an intimation that the government was prepared to move against the Chartists, if their actions went beyond the bounds of the law. It served, however, to incite rather than to quiet the turbulent spirits in the Convention which issued an address to the people when it took up the challenge of the government and intimated that unless redress of grievances was obtained, the Convention was ready to resort to armed resistance; it said: "If forced to resort to self-defence, even to that last tribunal we are prepared to appeal rather than continue in bondage, and rather to lay our heads upon the block as freemen than to rest them on the pillow as slaves. Interference by force, however, depends not upon us; and if the infatuation of those in power prompts them to have recourse to it, so surely as in the exercise of it they dare to trench upon the liberties of Britons, so surely shall they be met with that stern resolve which prompts men either to conquer or die."<sup>16</sup>

The queen's speech had shown the attitude of the government towards the Chartists and the probable attitude of Parliament towards the petition. And the question at once arose in regard to "the ulterior measures" to be adopted, if Parliament rejected the petition. This produced dissensions in the Convention and by March the delegates were hopelessly divided in their opinions as to the measures to be followed. The extreme element began a public agitation to prepare the people for insurrection and their activities became so pronounced in a meeting held in London, on March 11th, that the three delegates from Birmingham resigned from the Convention.

From this time the Convention gradually drifted into the control of the advocates of armed resistance and Dr. Fletcher succeeded in carrying a motion declaring the right of the people to arm in the defence of their rights and liberties. Delegates went down to the Midlands during the Whitsun week and organised meetings among the workmen to prepare them for armed

<sup>15</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 51.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.



resistance<sup>a</sup> and many Chartists commenced to drill and to arm themselves with pikes and muskets. A revolt of the Welsh miners broke out at the end of April and ended in the arrest of seventeen Chartists. The Home Secretary, Lord John Russell, now issued orders to the magistrates to preserve order and encouraged good citizens to form "societies of volunteers for the protection of life, liberty, and property."

Birmingham was becoming the centre of the spirit of resistance, and O'Connor proposed that the Convention adjourn to Birmingham on May 13th, in order to be nearer the centre of the disturbance and to direct better the people. When the delegates arrived at Birmingham, they were met by an enthusiastic multitude of workmen to the number of 50,000 who conducted them to the place of meeting and the next day the Convention issued the report of the committee to the people, setting forth the ulterior measures to be adopted, if the petition was rejected by Parliament. Lovett, who had been opposed to violent measures, had finally agreed to a compromise with O'Connor and agreed to abide by the decision of the people upon the ulterior measures. As secretary of the Convention he could do nothing less, if he was to retain his hold upon the Convention. These measures proposed that action should be decided by July 1st and suggested the following methods: "First, whether they should withdraw all money from the Banks and convert paper money into gold; secondly, whether they should proclaim a sacred month for a general strike; thirdly, whether they should secure arms to defend the laws, and constitutional privileges their ancestors had bequeathed to them; provide themselves with candidates for the next general election; and 'if returned by show of hands, such candidates to consider themselves veritable representatives of the people, to meet in London at a time hereafter to be determined on'; fourthly, whether they will resolve to deal exclusively with Chartists; fifthly, whether they will 'contend for the People's Charter and resolve that no counter-agitation for a less measure of justice shall divert them from their righteous object'; whether the people will determine to obey all the just and constitutional requests of the majority of the Convention."

The Convention then adjourned from May 16th to July 1st to give opportunity for public meetings and for the people to decide these questions, and it was proposed after the submission of these questions to the people, on the 1st of July, "to proceed to carry out the will of the people into execution."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Postgate, *Revolutions, 1789-1906*, p. 125.

Sir Charles Napier had been appointed by the government to take charge of the troops in the Midlands. He was a humane man and a lover of liberty and had some sympathy with the desires of the Chartists. It was due to his mild character and moderation that a more violent outbreak did not take place. Large gatherings of the people were held in the industrial centres during this interval and the "ulterior measures" were presented to the people; but few disturbances occurred. At the beginning of July, the Convention reassembled at Birmingham, and owing to the action of the magistrates forbidding public meetings at the Bull Ring, a conflict took place between the police and the people, resulting in a riot which lasted for some hours. The delegates succeeded in calming the people; but in spite of this, Taylor and some of the Chartists were arrested. The Convention was indignant at this arbitrary expression of power and Lovett proposed the following resolution which was adopted and printed and posted in the city. It reads: 1. "That this Convention is of the opinion that a wanton, flagrant, and unjust outrage has been made upon the people of Birmingham by a blood-thirsty and unconstitutional force from London, acting under the authority of men who, when out of office, sanctioned and took part in the meetings of the people; and now, when they share in the public plunder, seek to keep the people in social and political degradation. 2. That the people of Birmingham are the best judges of their own right to meet in the Bull Ring or elsewhere; have their own feelings to consult respecting outrage given, and are the best judges of their own power and resources to obtain justice. 3. That the summary and despotic arrest of Taylor, our respected colleague, affords another convincing proof of all absence of justice in England, and clearly shows that there is no security for lives, liberty, or property till the people have some control over the laws they are called upon to obey."<sup>18</sup> Lovett alone signed this protest and accompanied by Collins took it to the printer. Both were arrested and then, with Taylor, were released on bail.

The petition had now been brought before Parliament and it was to be decided in a few days; and to be nearer the scene and to influence the action of Parliament, the Convention removed to London on July 8th. Atwood had made a strong speech in favour of the petition on its second reading in which he ascribed the misery of the people to the gold currency and the resumption of specie payments in 1819. Lord John Russell replied for the

<sup>18</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 75.

government and pointed out that the Charter was merely a screen behind which was massed a revolutionary plan like the worst days of the French Revolution. He claimed that the petition exaggerated the condition of England and that universal suffrage would only result in making matters worse.

Disraeli expressed views on the Chartist movement which foreshadowed his attitude towards reform in the conflict of 1867. He wrote: "The Chartists are in hostility against the middle classes. They made no attack on the aristocracy nor on the Corn Laws; they attacked the new class, but not the old. I am aware that this discussion is distasteful to both of the great parties of the House. I regret it and am not ashamed to say, however, that while I disapprove of the Charter, I sympathise with the Chartists. They form a great body of our workingmen; nobody can deny that they labour under great grievances. Look at the House; it has been sitting now for five months. What has been done for the people? Nothing. The Government sees everything in the brightest colours; everything is the best in the best of worlds. The Government is busy making peers, creating baronets, at the very moment when a social insurrection is at our threshold. Out of the destruction of our old Constitution trouble and dishonour will grow up in this realm."<sup>19</sup>

The petition was defeated by a vote of 235 to 46 on July 13th, and Atwood, disgusted with the opposition of the Chartists with his currency ideas, retired from Parliament and gave up politics.

The day after the petition had been rejected by the House of Commons, the Convention passed a resolution in regard to the general strike for the 12th of August but not without opposition from some of the delegates, especially from those from Rochdale, who contended that the workers were in no condition to make the strike successful and they doubted whether they could be mobilised for that purpose. This resolution was passed in the absence of Taylor, O'Connor, and O'Brien from London, and on their return they raised the question again in the Convention and succeeded in reversing the decision of the Convention. They issued a manifesto to the workers on the general strike in the sacred month, but the opinions of the Chartists were so much divided on the question that it was deemed advisable to give up the strike. The Convention adjourned on September 13th and the first campaign of the Chartist movement came to an end.

In August and September, all the leaders of the Chartists of any importance were arrested and these arrests excited much bitter-

<sup>19</sup> "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 80.

ness among the Welsh miners. They rose in insurrection and marched down from the Welsh hills and came into contact with the troops and in a short skirmish, ten were killed and about fifty wounded; the rest dispersed and their leaders were arrested on the charge of high treason. On their trial, they were convicted and sentenced to death; but later they were reprieved and transported for life. Among those convicted were Frost, Williams, and Jones.

After this defeat, the Chartist movement began to decline and by 1840 its principal leaders were in prison; these included O'Brien, Vincent, O'Connor, Williams, and Binn. It was said that more than 400 arrests were made. The returning prosperity with employment and work were no doubt factors in this decline and failure of the movement; for the workmen always lost their interest in political agitation when work and wages were plentiful.

When O'Connor was released in August 1841, he once more began to revive the Chartist movement and through his paper, the *Northern Star*, he exercised a large influence among the workmen of the industrial centres of the north. Lovett and O'Brien, however, refused to be associated with this new movement and organised counter-associations which rejected the physical-force principle, and were ready to co-operate with the Anti-Corn League of the middle classes. So this left O'Connor supreme in the Chartist movement. In 1842, another economic crisis which brought in its train much suffering to the working classes helped to arouse the spirit of agitation. O'Connor got up another petition to Parliament and it contained 3,315,752 signatures. This petition was much more socialistic than the first in its spirit and its descriptions of the conditions of the poor. Two paragraphs showed that it was no longer an attack upon the middle class, but upon the whole system of society. "Your petitioners would direct the attention of your honourable House to the great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions and the salaries of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned, where riches and luxury prevail amongst the rulers and poverty and starvation amongst the ruled. With all due respect and loyalty, your petitioners would compare the daily income of the Sovereign Majesty with that of thousands of workmen of this nation; and whilst your petitioners have learned that Her Majesty receives daily for private use the sum of £164, 17s., 10d., they have also ascertained that many thousands of families of the labourers are only in receipt of 3¾d. per head per day." It also stated that Prince Albert received £104, 2s. a day, the King

of Hanover, £57,10s. a day, and Archbishop of Canterbury received £52, 10s. a day "whilst thousands of the poor have to maintain their families upon an income not exceeding 2d. per head per day." They also "complained that upwards of nine millions per annum are unjustly abstracted from them to maintain a church establishment—and entreat you to contrast the deeds of the clergy with the conduct of the founder of the Christian religion, who denounced worshippers of Mammon and taught charity, meekness, and brotherly love."<sup>20</sup>

The petition was introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Duncombe and he drew a vivid picture of the miseries of the poor and urged that the petitioners be allowed to appear at the bar of the House. In the argument which followed, there was a statement made by Lord John Russell on universal suffrage which is of interest in view of his attitude later to reform. He said: "I am aware that it is a doctrine frequently urged, and I perceive dwelt upon in the petition, that every male of a certain age has a right, absolute and inalienable, to elect a representative to take his place among the members in the Commons House of Parliament. I never could understand that indefeasible and inalienable right . . . but if it be for the good of the people at large, if it be conducive to the right government of the State,—and if it be disadvantageous to the community at large that suffrage should be universal, then I say that on such a subject the consideration of the public good should prevail and that no inalienable right can be quoted against that which the good of the whole demands. And as our society is very complicated and property very unequally divided it might come that a parliament issued from universal suffrage might destroy or shake those institutions which are of the utmost value in holding society together."<sup>21</sup>

The petition was rejected by a large majority, only 49 voting for it; but many free-traders voted with the radicals.

A strike developed at Aston-under-Lyne which spread throughout the kingdom especially in the industrial centres of the north and closed nearly all the mills in Lancashire. The usual disturbances occurred and the strike was broken by the use of soldiers; the men then returned to work; and the Chartist movement declined under the influence of returning prosperity. O'Connor, however, kept the movement alive by turning its energies in the direction of a National Land Company which was to settle

<sup>20</sup> Postgate, *Revolutions, 1789-1906*, p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> "British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 136.

poor Chartists upon small holdings. This scheme was fostered by subscriptions from the Chartists; but in the end it proved a failure and much money was lost and the company went bankrupt in 1848.

The year 1848 was ushered in by the French Revolution whose reverberations were felt in every country of Europe. It could not but have an effect upon the workingmen of England. When the news of the Revolution arrived, the workingmen were thrown into commotion and in London they gathered in great crowds in public halls to listen again to the Chartist leaders and to organise for a new demonstration of the working classes in favour of universal suffrage and reform. The same spirit was manifested in Glasgow and Manchester and other cities and the cry to imitate the example of the French was taken up by the people. O'Connor issued an appeal to the Chartists on April 3d, in which the keynote was a new social system. "But in addition to the Charter we have land reform, which will give bread to the workingmen when the Charter is carried. The Charter and the Land! Those are our objects. Protect us in our work, People of England! Sign the Petition."<sup>22</sup>

At the same date, the Chartists assembled in a convention at London and drew up a petition similar to that of 1842, but which laid down the following principles: "Labour is the source of all wealth. The people are the source of all political power. The worker has the right to the produce of his labour. Taxation without parliamentary representation is tyranny. The resources and economic means of a country are best developed and administered most advantageously by means of laws which are made by the representatives of the working and industrious classes. In recognition of these principles the Chartists demand that the People's Charter should become the law of the land."<sup>23</sup>

These workmen's demonstrations and the revival of the Chartist movement struck terror into the ranks of the middle and upper classes. The people seemed to be in a state of great agitation and the leaders talked of obtaining their ends by peaceable means, if possible, but by revolution, if necessary. The Convention set apart April 10th for carrying the petition to Parliament and it was claimed that it contained the signatures of six million people. The petition was to be presented to the House of Commons and to be accompanied by an immense procession, and April 10th was fixed for the breaking out of the Revolution.

<sup>22</sup> "British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 167.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

The government immediately took a decisive step to oppose this movement by appointing the Duke of Wellington to command the troops in London and he enrolled, as special constables from the middle classes, more than 200,000 persons. This display of force and the prohibition of the procession to carry the petition to Parliament, broke the effect of the people's demonstration and O'Connor was reduced to the ignominious position of conveying the petition to the House of Commons in three hansom cabs. The petition was referred to a committee and they discovered that many of the signatures were fraudulent and that it contained only about one-third of the number of the names which had been reported. The dispersion of the people after the meeting on Kensington Common had discouraged them and they lost faith in O'Connor, who had promised them that he would carry the Charter to Parliament and compel the House of Commons to adopt it. All attempts at a rising were put down by force and soon everything quieted down. Since the People's Charter had been launched in 1838, many things had occurred to break the force of the movement of 1848. The factory Acts had been passed; the Corn Laws had been repealed; wages had risen, and the standard of living among the working classes had begun to go up. There had been a revival of trade unionism and the skilled mechanics were withdrawing from the movement which now had degenerated into a campaign to introduce a new social order by physical force. Besides O'Connor had proved himself an incapable leader, and his failure to carry out his plan had discredited him with the people. From now on the disintegrating elements began to break up the solidarity of the working-class movement and different leaders organised leagues and societies with divergent aims. The workingmen were learning that little was to be obtained by agitation whose end tended only to a display of physical force.

The Chartist movement, however, had done its work in educating the workmen in the methods of political agitation and revealing to them both their strength and their weakness; but it had done more in awakening the upper classes to the needs and claims of the working classes and in laying the foundations for the extension of the franchise and the triumph of democracy when the fears of the middle and upper classes had been quieted by a period of order and security. The Chartist movement, at the same time, had developed a class consciousness among the workers and created a solidarity that made them ready to take the next step when the competition between the parties for po-

litical power led them to turn to the working classes for support in carrying their special legislation. From this time on, there is a distinct change among the leading men as to the demands of the people, and this change was the result of the agitation by the working classes which forced their needs upon the attention of the nation and led it to recognise that they were responsible for the manner in which the masses lived. As John Stuart Mill said in 1845, "The democratic movement among the operative classes, commonly known as Chartism, was the first open separation of interest, feeling, and opinion, between the labouring portion of the commonwealth and all above them. It was the revolt of nearly all the active talent, and a great part of the physical force, of the working classes, against their whole relation to society. Conscientious and sympathising minds among the ruling classes could not but be strongly impressed by such a protest. They could not but ask themselves, with misgiving, what there was to say in reply to it; how the existing social arrangements could best be justified to those who deemed themselves aggrieved by them. It seemed highly desirable that the benefits derived from those arrangements by the poor should be made less questionable—should be such as could not easily be overlooked. If the poor had reason for their complaints, the higher classes had not fulfilled their duties as governors; if they had no reason, neither had those classes fulfilled their duties in allowing them to grow up so ignorant and uncultivated as to be open to these mischievous delusions. . . . While some, by the physical and moral circumstances which they saw around them, were made to feel that the condition of the labouring classes *ought* to be attended to, others were made to see that it *would* be attended to, whether they wished to be blind to it or not."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> J. S. Mill, "Dissertations and Discussions," Vol. II, p. 188.



## CHAPTER VIII

### DEMOCRACY REACHES ITS FLOOD: REFORM BILLS OF 1867 AND 1885

THE unrest and tumult of 1848 and the fears aroused among the property classes had its immediate effect upon Parliament. Ten years before Lord John Russell had spoken about the "finality of Reform"; now he made a speech in Parliament, as minister of the crown, in which he said that an extension of the franchise was necessary. While he was not supported by his colleagues in the ministry, yet it raised the issue of reform again and the radicals in Parliament took up the question and pressed the Whig Ministry to introduce another Reform Bill. This demand met with much opposition from the old Whigs and from Lord Palmerston, the Foreign Minister.

But the Chartist movement had an effect of far-reaching importance for the triumph of the democratic movement. Lovett and his followers, who had seceded from the movement under O'Connor and turned their attention to the work of the Anti-Corn Law League, had come into contact with Cobden and Bright. When the Corn Laws were repealed in 1846, Bright had proposed to Cobden that they should take up the cause of the people and turn their energies to win for the workingmen the extension of the franchise; but Cobden refused, as he said, because he had no interest in reform, but only in retrenchment, peace, and economic reform. Bright, then, determined to take up the work of reform alone. His experience in the election of 1847 at Manchester had revealed that the old-fashioned Whigs were "sore at the election of such a Jack Cade" and preferred to put up the son of a peer against him. This had brought home to Bright the tendency among the upper middle class towards snobbery and the need of extending the franchise. He wrote to Villiers at this time, "If they run me down for want of 'social position' it is a great temptation to us to try to rouse a middle-class spirit against my aristocratic opponent."<sup>1</sup>

The Chartist agitation confirmed his opinion that parlia-

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 180.

mentary reform was necessary. In the beginning of 1848, he wrote, "We shall have, and ought to have, a powerful agitation in favour of a real Parliamentary Reform, and to gain this would be worth some time longer of commercial depression. We have deluded ourselves with the notion that we are a free people, and have a good government and a representative system, whilst in fact our representative system is for the most part a sham, and the forms of representation are used to consolidate the supremacy of the titled and proprietary class."<sup>2</sup>

Four months later, after the suppression of the Chartist agitation, he wrote: "The Government seem to make a great uproar about the Chartists. They have spies among those wretched fools, to stimulate them to conspiracy and to outrage, and then getting a lot of them together they pounce upon them, and imprison or transport them. This is a repetition of the old tricks of Government practised with great temporary effect in 1817 to 1820. The aristocracy want to frighten the middle classes from the pursuit of Reform, and to do this they and their emissaries stimulate a portion of the least wise of the people to menace and violence, to damage the cause of Reform, and for a time they succeed." He proposed at this time a new popular party. "We can have a party out of doors more formidable than we had in the League, and can work the Constitution so as to reform it through itself."

Cobden had taken the ground, in 1849, that the purchase of the forty-shilling freeholds was a sufficient franchise reform, but Bright objected to this and argued for a much larger measure, saying, "The case for Parliamentary Reform is more glaring and undeniable if possible than our Free Trade cause was."<sup>3</sup>

Bright now became the centre of a small group of radicals who exerted an influence in the House of Commons by voting together, and it was this group to which Lord John Russell was appealing in his motion for reform in 1851. Parliament at this time was dominated by the two parties who differed very little except as to the Corn Laws and contended with each other over the possession of power and office. Bright, on the contrary, had become possessed with the great idea of reform and had said recently at Oldham, "since the league was dissolved, that no object is worth a real and great effort short of a thorough reform in Parliament, and our object ought to be to discover the best way to that object." But there was a long road to travel before reform

<sup>2</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 183.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

would come before Parliament, with the backing of public opinion to carry it through.

The Whig Ministry fell in 1851 on the Ecclesiastical Bill and the Conservatives came into power under Lord Derby and Disraeli. In 1852, Lord John Russell was angling for the support of Sir James Graham, one of the Peelites, who had been on the committee which formulated the Reform Bill of 1832. It was natural that the question of the extension of the franchise should come up for discussion and the merits of reform be considered. Graham had contended recently in the House of Commons that he no longer "looked upon the Reform Act of 1832 as a finality." And he wrote to a friend at this time, that "if we are to have another Revolution—for such Lord John himself considered the last Reform Act to be—it will be necessary to bear this in mind. (In revolutionary movements it is not wise to lag behind.) When the measure is once launched, the time for prudence will have gone by."<sup>4</sup> And he held that after Lord John's making the declaration in the House of Commons of a new Reform Bill in 1848, "he ought to carry it out and must do so."

Graham's ideas of reform rapidly crystallised in the next year and he expressed his opinions thus: "With proper care the Reform Act of 1832 might have been sufficient for our day. But after the Queen's declaration from the Throne at the opening of the last session, that this measure required revision, and after Lord John Russell's late attempt by legislation to amend it, any effort to resist change would be an absurdity; and, if the task of revision is to be undertaken, I can be no party to a sham. The work must proceed in good earnest, and the flagrant imperfections left untouched in 1832 must be rectified. Disfranchisement must begin anew, and a higher number of electors must be fixed as the minimum for retaining the privilege of returning members."<sup>5</sup>

He felt that bribery and intimidation which disgraced the recent election had given a new impulse to reform; but that difficulties would be encountered from the Whig aristocracy who would refuse to disfranchise their boroughs. Nevertheless, in spite of these difficulties, he urged an effective opposition with a watchword, "Progress and Reform." He believed that reform was now inevitable and should be made a part of the programme of the Whig party. "We shall arrive," he said, "at new combinations and a legitimate division into two parties, by the natural course of events which ebb and flow like the tide, between the

<sup>4</sup>Parker, "Life of Sir James Graham," Vol. II, p. 137.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 170.

extremes of oligarchy and of democracy. But democracy is the flood, and will prevail." <sup>6</sup>

The Derby Ministry was defeated on the Budget, and the Whigs came into office again in 1853. The defeat was the result of a combination of the Whigs and Peelites supported by the radicals under Cobden and Bright. Before the cabinet was a week in power, Bright began to urge upon them the necessity of bringing in a Reform Bill. Lord John Russell was anxious to pass a Reform Bill, but he encountered strenuous opposition from Lords Lansdowne and Palmerston. Graham, who had entered the cabinet, supported Russell and in his re-election at Carlisle, he stated his position on reform, though he objected to the ballot. His opponent was a Chartist sent down from London, but he easily defeated him and his radical constituency returned him with a good majority. His views at this time were "that the extension of the Suffrage may be granted with safety, and cannot much longer be withheld without danger, after the promises which have been made. Once made, they must be redeemed, and the measure must be substantial, not illusory." <sup>7</sup>

Bright, in the meantime, had gone down to Manchester to organise a meeting in the interest of reform. He had no confidence that the government would take any action, but under the pressure of public opinion. "The Government are vaguely for Reform," he writes to Cobden, "the question is when? and how much? They are not for the ballot, and Lord John and Graham argue against it as men do when driven to their wits' end for something like an argument." <sup>8</sup>

In his address at Manchester, Bright argued for the ballot and exhibited the mode of voting in Massachusetts, U. S., and won the approbation of his audience. Then petitions were circulated in the northern cities and boroughs and sent up to Parliament. Under the pressure of this agitation, Lord John Russell brought in a Bill for Reform in February 1854. The bill provided for an extension of the franchise to a larger number of the middle class, reduced the minimum in the counties to £10, and gave the suffrage to a section of the working classes. Bright regarded the distribution of the seats as bad, but accepted the bill as a half-way measure. In the opinion of Lord Palmerston the bill went too far and the consideration of the bill was postponed from time to time, until under the pressure of the imminence of the Crimean

War which broke out before the end of the year, the bill was finally dropped. For the next two years the war absorbed the energies and attention of the nation and Bright and Cobden were occupied with advocating the principles of peace. With the close of the war, interest again revived in reform.

In September 1857, Lord John Russell began a correspondence with Sir James Graham on the best means of extending the reform of 1832 and without going beyond a moderate reform. His ideas were: First, disfranchise all boroughs having fewer than 250 ten-pound voters; secondly, place in Schedule B (to lose one member) those having less than 500 ten-pound voters; thirdly, give right of voting, as in bill of 1854, to ten-pounders in counties; fourthly, add to the ten-pound voters in the boroughs the municipal voters, as burgesses—"your own idea."<sup>9</sup>

These proposals of moderate reform did not meet with the approval of Bright. He wanted a household suffrage in the boroughs and this to be connected with the ballot. He wrote at this time a letter to Cobden asking him to show it to Graham in which he set forth his views, ending with the sentence, "a bad, an unjust, and disappointing Reform Bill is a revolutionary measure."<sup>10</sup>

In February 1857, Palmerston was defeated by a majority of 16 and dissolved Parliament and appealed to the country. In the election which ensued, he made an appeal to the "Jingo" spirit of the electors and won a sweeping victory. The coterie of radicals of the Manchester School went down to defeat. Cobden was defeated at Hedderfield, Miall at Rochdale, and Bright and Gibson at Manchester. Bright's opposition to the Crimean War combined with his policy of reform in the interest of the workingmen had offended the rich manufacturers of Manchester and they elected in his place Sir John Potter who belonged to the Palmerstonian Whigs.

Bright took this defeat philosophically, as he was abroad at the time in Italy, recovering from a severe illness which had shattered his health. Later in the year he returned to England and went to the Highlands of Scotland to recuperate. While he was there he received an invitation from Birmingham to stand as their member for Parliament. Their representative had died, and a by-election was to take place. Bright consented and was returned without opposition. His standing for Birmingham marked a new epoch in his life and a new era in the progress of

<sup>9</sup> Parker, "Life of Sir James Graham," p. 313.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 307. Quoted.

the democratic movement. Birmingham was a middle-class constituency and was well suited to be the centre of the new movement in the interest of parliamentary reform. Cobden commenting on the fact of Bright's election by Birmingham, said, "The honest and independent course taken by the people of Birmingham, their exemption from aristocratic snobbery, and their fair appreciation of a democratic son of the people, confirm me in the opinion I have always had that the social and political state of that town is far more healthy than that of Manchester; and it arises from the fact that the industry of the hardware district is carried on by small manufacturers, employing a few men and boys each, sometimes only an apprentice or two; whilst the great capitalists in Manchester form an aristocracy, individual members of which wield an influence over sometimes two thousand persons. The former state of society is more natural and healthy in a moral and political sense. There is a freer intercourse between all classes than in the Lancashire town, where a great and impassable gulf separates the workman from his employer." <sup>11</sup>

This was at once evident when Bright commenced his great campaign for reform there in October 1858. He now rose to the greatness of the occasion and lifted the reform movement out of the sphere of parliamentary politics and established it on the broad basis of popular opinion and the right of the working classes to have a voice in the legislation of the nation. Bright launched forth in a campaign in which household suffrage was made the cardinal doctrine in his plan of reform, and he assailed the selfishness of the aristocracy and the subservient middle class who opposed the claims of the workingmen. He declared that the moderate reform which was advocated by the more liberal Whigs would not meet the demands of the people; that it was only an effort to stave off the real reform for twenty years and to keep the people quiet. With the genius of a true Reformer, he lifted the question on to the broad basis of justice and right and he appealed to the moral sense of the people which created the enthusiasm and awakened the force of passion which was destined in the end to bear down all obstacles and carry reform through the barriers of class interest and aristocratic prejudice.

In his opening address at Birmingham on the 26th of October, 1858, he struck the high note of reform, which afterwards was sustained in his subsequent addresses. Speaking in the Town Hall, packed to the door, so that men could not move, much less raise their hands, he told the people that the hour had struck for

<sup>11</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 263.

launching a campaign for a reform worthy of the liberties of Englishmen and called the men of Birmingham to rise to the greatness of their fathers who thirty years before had conducted to triumph the Reform Bill of 1832. Calling attention first to the state of the representation in England, "Wherever you go in Great Britain or Ireland, five out of every six men you meet have no vote," he went on to say, "There are in the House of Commons at present 330 Members, more than half the House, whose whole number of constituents do not amount to more than 180,000, and there are at the same time in Parliament 24 Members whose constituents are upwards of 200,000 in number."<sup>12</sup>

Then he called upon the middle class, a large minority of which were unrepresented, to unite with the workingmen to obtain their political rights. Towards the close of his address, he uttered these stirring words which kindled the enthusiasm of his audience to the highest pitch, "Shall we then, I ask you, even for a moment, be hopeless of our great cause? I feel almost ashamed even to argue it to such a meeting as this. I call to mind where I am, and who are those whom I see before me. Am I not in the town of Birmingham—England's central capital; and do not these eyes look upon the sons of those who, not thirty years ago, shook the fabric of privilege to its base? Not a few of the strong men of that time are now white with age. They approach the confines of their mortal day. Its evening is cheered with the remembrance of that great contest, and they rejoice in the freedom they have won. Shall their sons be less noble than they? Shall the fire which they kindled be extinguished with you? I see your answer in every face. You are resolved that the legacy which they bequeathed to you, you will hand down in an accumulated wealth of freedom to your children. As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel now sensibly and painfully that I am not what I was. I speak with diminished fire; I act with a lessened force; but as I am, my countrymen and my constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle."<sup>13</sup>

Such an appeal went home to every inhabitant of Birmingham and lifted them on to the high plain of conviction and devotion to the cause of reform which made Birmingham the centre of the democratic movement and kept it in the line of steady progress until ten years later they saw the Reform Bill passed by Parliament and the campaign crowned with success. In the next two months he repeated substantially the same doctrine at great

<sup>12</sup> "Life of John Bright," p. 270.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 272.

meetings held in Edinburgh, Manchester, Bradford, and Glasgow. The effect of Bright's campaign for reform was seen in the change of feeling among men like Sir James Graham who were thrown by his ideas into opposition. Writing to Russell in January 1859, he said, "Bright has avowed his purpose. He is dissatisfied with the mixed form of government under which we live, and he seeks to change it. He considers an hereditary peerage, a landed aristocracy, and an independent House of Lords inconsistent with liberty; and because the second chamber is not representative he seeks to render the House of Commons purely democratic, to deprive land of its influence there, and to change that Assembly into a mere creature of numbers, apart from property and intelligence. . . . I wish to adhere to the principles of the measure of 1832. I believe them to be susceptible of extension without danger if within reasonable limits; but I am opposed to any subversion of the existing balance of interests by Tory devices, and to any levelling process on the republican model, such as Bright seeks to carry by intimidation."<sup>14</sup>

The effect of his campaign in behalf of reform riveted the attention of the whole kingdom. *Punch* made Bright the subject of its cartoons and he was the object of much hostile criticism. His speeches were reported in full in the newspapers and he became the best known man in the country. Chief-Justice Campbell expressed the opinion with which the upper classes viewed Bright's campaign, when he said, "I begin to be afraid that I may live to see John Bright President of the Anglican Republic."<sup>15</sup>

The Palmerstonian Government had been defeated in the House of Commons in 1858 through internal dissensions, and the Conservative party came into power under Derby in the Lords and Disraeli as leader in the House of Commons. Bright's campaign for reform and the agitation in the country had had its effect upon the Conservative Government and Disraeli had brought in a Reform Bill which extended the franchise "laterally," not downwards. Bright designated it as a Bill of "fancy franchises," as it proposed special franchises for doctors, clergy, graduates, stock-holders of the East India Co., state pensioners of £20 a year and an increase of county voters dependent on the landlords without the protection of the ballot. Bright united with the Whigs in opposition to the bill. It was brought into the House of Commons in February and defeated on the last day of March 1859 by 39 votes. A dissolution followed. The general

<sup>14</sup> Parker, "Life of Sir James Graham," pp. 367-8.

<sup>15</sup> "Life of John Bright," p. 276.



election gave a few more seats to the Conservatives, but not enough to overcome the majority, if the Whigs and radicals united. Lord John Russell promised Bright that the Whigs would bring in a "good Reform Bill" and the radicals united with the Whigs, and Disraeli's Government was defeated on the amendment to the address on want of confidence in the ministry, in a House of 643 members voting, by a majority of 13. The ministry resigned and the Whigs came into office under Palmerston and Lord John Russell. The small majority of 13 votes showed that Bright and his radical adherents had been the deciding factor in the change of ministry. This led to an offer to Cobden and Gibson of a cabinet position, and Lord John Russell, in writing to Bright of this offer, added, "You will not be surprised that Lord Palmerston said he regretted that the course you had taken, not with regard to the reform of the House of Commons, but with regard to other institutions, considered essential by the great majority of Englishmen, prevented his proposing to you to join the Cabinet."<sup>16</sup>

This was in reference to Bright's attacks upon the aristocracy in his Birmingham address. It transpired that the queen was even opposed to offer Bright a Privy Councillorship on the ground of his attacks upon the institutions of the country. But Bright did not desire office. He held then, and since, that he could serve his country and the cause in which he was enlisted better out of office, rather than in. It was only with extreme reluctance, when the cause of reform had triumphed, that he consented to take office.

In 1861, Lord John Russell threw over the plan for reform in spite of the promise he had made to Bright in 1859. Lord Palmerston would not hear of any reform which involved the extension of the franchise. Besides the Whigs as a body were opposed to reform and the House of Lords was sure to defeat any measure of reform which came up to that House. Bright wrote of this transaction in his journal, "Lord John Russell threw over the Reform question in a speech of offensive tone and language. I replied, and spoke on the general question. I had great difficulty in restraining my indignation at his conduct. I shall keep no terms with this Government for the future. It is base, as was the former Government of Lord Palmerston. How long Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Gibson will go through the mire with them I know not."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 282.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 293-4.

The events of the next four years occasioned by the Civil War in America were to occupy the attention of the British nation and to exercise a profound influence upon the progress of the democratic movement in England. They absorbed the interest and energy of Bright and his speeches in favour of the North established his reputation as the tribune of democracy in two continents. On the breaking out of the war in 1861, the sympathy of the aristocracy and upper middle classes was with the South. While the government proclaimed its neutrality, it was unmistakable that it looked with no disfavour to a termination of the war which would lead to a separation between the states. The war was considered as a struggle between two groups of states; the one fighting to maintain the Union: the other to form a Confederacy on the basis of Free Trade and States Rights. The issue of slavery as the secret of the tremendous contest was overshadowed in the minds of Englishmen by the more apparent causes of the struggle.

Even Bright who became the champion of the cause of the North did not realise at first the full significance of the war. Writing to Senator Sumner on September 6, 1861, after the disaster of the battle of Bull Run, he had said: "The middle class wish abolition to come out of your contentions, but they are irritated by your foolish tariff; and having so lately become Free Traders themselves, of course, they are great purists now, and severely condemn you—Lords Palmerston and Russell in public speak in a friendly tone, and I have been disposed to believe in the honest disposition of the latter; but I do not like the moving of troops to Canada, for it indicates some idea of trouble in the future. They may only fear it, acting on ancient tradition, and may not intend it. Still with our upper class hostility to your country and Government, with the wonderful folly of your Tariff telling against you here, and with the damage arising from the blockade of the Southern ports, you will easily understand that the feeling here is not so thorough and cordial to you as I could wish it to be." "Many who cavil at you now say, 'If the War was for liberating the slave, then we could see something worth fighting for, and we could sympathise with the North.' I cannot urge you to this course; the remedy for slavery would be almost worse than the disease, and yet how can such a disease be got rid of without some desperate remedy?"<sup>18</sup>

That was a true picture of public opinion at the time; but

<sup>18</sup> Mass. Historical Society, Vol. XLVI, p. 95.

after the episode of the *Trent*, the sentiment among the aristocracy and upper classes swung more and more in favour of the South and every victory was hailed in these circles with satisfaction. Bright set himself to combat this spirit and to arouse England to see the true nature of the conflict. He saw that the North was fighting the battle of freedom and that the triumph of democracy trembled in the balance as the result of the struggle. He knew that the sympathy of the aristocracy and oligarchy which sat in Parliament, with the South, arose from an inherited antipathy to democracy whose advent in England would follow the victory of the armies of the North. His condemnation of the South was the result of his conviction that it was aiming to overthrow free government.

With this vision he went to work to educate the workingmen, who were the chief sufferers from the embargo on cotton, in the true principles involved in the conflict.

Speaking at Birmingham in December 1861, he said, "There may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross or calumny the most wicked can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic."<sup>19</sup>

Again in a speech at Birmingham a year later, he said: "I am sure it is true in Lancashire, where the workingmen have seen themselves coming down from prosperity to ruin, from independence to a subsistence on charity, I say that I believe that the unenfranchised but not hopeless millions of this country will never sympathise with a revolt which is intended to destroy the liberty of a continent, and to build on its ruins a mighty fabric of human bondage." "In that land, there are not six millions of grown men—I speak of the Free States—excluded from the Constitution of their country and their electoral franchise; there, there is a free Church—a free school, free land, a free vote, and a free career for the child of the humblest born in the land. My countrymen who work for your living, remember this; there will be one wild shriek of freedom to startle all mankind, if that American Republic should be overthrown."<sup>20</sup>

But among his many addresses to the workingmen, none were finer than that delivered before the trades unions of London in March 1863. He placed before them the great issues of the war

<sup>19</sup> Bright, "American Question," p. 66.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 124.

and what it meant for the democracy of England. † He said: "Privilege thinks it has a great interest in it, and every morning, with blatant voice, it comes into your streets and curses the American Republic. Privilege has beheld an afflicting spectacle for many years past. It has beheld thirty millions of men, happy and prosperous, without emperor, without king, without the surroundings of a court, without nobles, except such as are made by eminence in intellect and virtue, without state bishops and state priests,—without great armies and great navies, without great debt and without great taxes. Privilege has shuddered at what might happen to old Europe if this grand experiment should succeed. But you, the workers,—you, striving after a better time,—you, struggling upwards towards the light, with slow and painful steps,—you have no cause to look with jealousy upon a country which, amongst all the great nations of the globe, is that one where labour has met with the highest honour, and where it has reaped its greatest reward."<sup>21</sup>

The working classes remained loyal to the cause of the North during those fateful years of the war, and it was their loyalty which arrested the hands of the ministry in those critical days in the autumn of 1862 and summer of 1863 when the upper classes were hoping that the cause of freedom and democracy was lost. The triumph of the Northern arms in 1865 marked a new advent in the march of democracy. It established on a firm basis the "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," not only in America, but also in Europe.

The reaction in England was immediate and far-reaching in its effects. The general election of July 1865 was marked with a gain of radical power and Palmerston held his majority against the Conservatives. The victories of John Stuart Mill and Thomas Hughes at the polls marked a step in the growing democratic sentiment. Gladstone was defeated at Oxford University and was elected for the constituency of South Lancashire. In his campaign for his election, he met with a most enthusiastic reception from the people. In his diary, he tells us, "Went off at eleven—to the Free Trade Hall (Manchester) which was said to have 6,000 people. They were in unbounded enthusiasm. I spoke for 1¼ hr.; and when the meeting concluded went off to Liverpool. . . . Another meeting of 5,000 at the Amphitheatre, if possible more enthusiastic than that at Manchester." There he began his address: "At last, my friends, I am come among you unmuzzled." It was an exciting campaign and when

<sup>21</sup> Bright, "American Question," p. 176.

the votes were counted Gladstone was third in the poll, but secured his seat, with two Tory colleagues above him.<sup>22</sup>

On this election, Bright wrote, "It is a national gain. . . am sure that Mr. Gladstone is happier in his new position, altho' he may have felt a pang at parting with his old friends. I think we are very near a step in reform."<sup>23</sup>

To Villiers, he wrote on July 27th, "The elections are over, and nobody has been able to discover the great Tory reaction. . . . I wish to urge you to adhere to the Bill of 1860 on the Suffrage—unless you can go to Household Suffrage. I am sure that anything less will be folly, and will probably end in the ruin of the Government."<sup>24</sup>

Fortunately for the cause of reform, Lord Palmerston died in October, and the way was clear for a Reform Bill. As long as Palmerston lived, he would have opposed the extension of the franchise. Earl Russell succeeded Palmerston as premier and Gladstone as leader in the House of Commons. Bright now urged the government to bring in a good Franchise Bill and pointed out that a dissolution would not be necessary to carry the bill. "In the case of the Bill of 1832 a new Election was necessary. That Bill was a revolution—so much was swept away, and so much was new, that it would have been absurd and impossible to go on with the old Parliament, but now it is not a revolution that is coming, but a progress on the old foundation."<sup>25</sup>

In March 1866, Gladstone introduced the Reform Bill in the House of Commons and the great battle for reform which was to last for nearly two years began. The provisions of the bill were moderate. He proposed to reduce the occupation franchise of the counties from £50 to £14; and from £10 to £7 in the boroughs. The extension of the franchise was the vital element in the bill and there was no suggestion of redistribution of seats. The ministers were taunted with having brought in Mr. Bright's bill; but he had nothing to do with it and only accepted it as the best to be obtained at the time. Bright's comment on the bill was that it "is a perfectly honest bill. It will, if it becomes law, give votes extensively to the middle classes, both in counties and boroughs, and it will overthrow the principle of working-class exclusion which was established by the Reform Bill of 1832. It

<sup>22</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, pp. 145-7.

<sup>23</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 343.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 343.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345.

will admit to the franchise so many of the workingmen in all important and populous boroughs, that they, as a class, will no longer feel themselves intentionally excluded and insulted by the law." <sup>26</sup>

The opposition at once developed among the Tories and the anti-democratic Whigs under the leadership of Robert Lowe. They objected to any extension of the franchise to the workingmen. Early in the debate, Lowe asked a question concerning the fitness of the workingmen to vote which became the battleground of the controversy both within and outside the House. "If you want venality," he said, "if you want ignorance, if you want drunkenness and facility to be intimidated, or if, on the other hand, you want impulsive, unreflecting, and violent people, where do you look for them in the constituencies? Do you go to the top, or to the bottom?" <sup>27</sup>

Bright was moved to indignation at the "frantic violence" with which the majority of the House of Commons cheered these words of Lowe. He at once had them printed and circulated among the workingmen as an insult to their class. The controversy raged around this question of the fitness of the workmen to vote. The political attitude of the upper classes during the Civil War in America was now dragged into the debate. Bright, Foster, and Fawcett contrasted the spirit of the Lancashire operatives during the cotton famine with the political wisdom of the upper classes who desired to make war in behalf of the slave-owners. Lowe continued the opposition and became the leader of a group of Whigs who were opposed to reform, whom Bright called the "forty thieves." As the controversy deepened Gladstone rose to the greatness of the occasion and threw himself with unparalleled energy into the contest. He let fall a phrase in reply to Lowe which was long remembered, "That the persons to whom their remarks apply are our fellow-subjects, our fellow-Christians, our own flesh and blood." <sup>28</sup> This was instantly denounced by Lord Cranborne, afterwards Lord Salisbury, as "sentimental rant."

On April 6th at Liverpool, Gladstone roused the people to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by affirming "that the Government would not flinch, that they had passed the Rubicon, broken the bridges, burned their boats."

He began to see that the democratic movement was in harmony

<sup>26</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 351.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 352.

<sup>28</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," p. 203.

with the spirit of the age and that it was irresistible; that it was destined to triumph and that opposition would only serve to delay its triumph for a short period. So he told the House of Commons in one of his most eloquent speeches: "You cannot fight against the future, time is on our side. The great social forces which move onwards in their might and majesty, and which the tumult of our debates does not for a moment impede or disturb—those great social forces are against you; they are marshalled on our side; and the banner which we now carry in this fight, though perhaps at some moment it may droop over our sinking heads, yet it soon again will float in the eye of Heaven, and it will be borne by the firm hands of the united people of the three kingdoms, perhaps not to an easy, but to a certain and to a not far distant victory."<sup>29</sup>

But the victory was anything but easy in the House which Gladstone faced. Bright had branded the opposition of Lowe and his friend in a happy phrase which stuck. He "has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented."<sup>30</sup>

And before long Lowe had called around him many of the discontented who formed a coterie of 44 who decided the defeat of the bill the 18th of June, by a majority of 11 against the ministry. The vote, as Gladstone says, was startling and produced an immense sensation. "With the cheering of the adversary there was shouting, violent flourishing of hats, and other manifestations which I think novel and inappropriate."<sup>31</sup>

After a serious consultation of the cabinet over the question of a dissolution, it came to the conclusion that the best policy was to resign; but Bright questioned the wisdom of this step and felt that if the ministry had dissolved Parliament they would have swept the country as in 1832.

The Derby-Disraeli Government came into office in July, but in the interim there were signs that the workingmen, who had shown no special interest in the reform, would not brook the refusal of the franchise. On June 28th, a great gathering of the people assembled at the Carlton House terrace shouting for Gladstone and liberty. On July 2d, the Reform Club planned a demonstration at Hyde Park, but the Home Secretary forbade it, influenced by the clamour of those who held that Hyde Park

<sup>29</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," p. 204.

<sup>30</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 355.

<sup>31</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," p. 206.

should be reserved for wealth and fashion. Bright felt that the people had a legal right to hold such a meeting and wrote to the Secretary of the Reform League, "You have asserted your right to meet on Primrose Hill and in Trafalgar Square. I hope after Monday next no one will doubt your right to meet in Hyde Park. If a public meeting in a public park is denied you, and if millions of intelligent and honest men are denied the franchise, on what foundation does our liberty rest? . . . or is there in the country any liberty but the toleration of the ruling class? This is a serious question, but it is necessary to ask it, and some answer must be given to it."<sup>22</sup>

On July 23d, Mr. Beales at the head of a great procession proceeded to the entrance of Hyde Park and demanded entrance and was refused by the authorities. He then proceeded to lead the procession to Trafalgar Square where the meeting was held and a resolution passed in favour of reform and Mr. Gladstone. In the meantime, the mob which had gathered and followed the procession to Hyde Park, remained behind and strove to obtain admission to the park. In a good-humoured spirit, they broke down the railings and swarmed over the forbidden ground. No special harm was done with the exception of trampling down the flower-beds. But their action raised a great outcry; some blamed the government for refusing to allow the people to assemble there; others were moved with anger against Beales and the Reform League for leading the people there in the first instance. But the demonstration was not without its effect. It revealed the ugly spirit among the working people and their discontent with the defeat of the Reform Bill. The Conservative Government and party felt that they had a new spirit to deal with and that the rising spirit among the people could not any longer be checked simply by mere palliatives.

The demonstration at Hyde Park marked the beginning of a series of demonstrations by the people throughout the large cities of the north, which for magnitude and enthusiasm had never been paralleled in English history. These meetings marked the rising tide of democracy which came in like a swelling flood until it bore down all barriers, swept away all opposition, and in its turbulent course carried the Conservative Government over to reform and only subsided when the great Reform Bill of 1867 was passed by Parliament. The quality and character of these popular demonstrations was a vital factor in the conversion of the Conservatives to reform. The presiding genius in

<sup>22</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 360.



this democratic movement was John Bright. The movement seemed to rise spontaneously out of the conviction in the minds of the middle and working classes that the extension of the franchise was the right of the workmen of Great Britain. In this last stage of democracy, Bright did not create the movement; he only guided it along the channels of legal association and parliamentary evolution. His watchword had always been, "Moderate, but irresistible in our moderation."<sup>33</sup>

But the irresistible power of democracy grew out of the spread of liberal ideas, the sense of justice, and of the right of the workmen to share in the government of their country. It was the culmination of the first movement for democracy started among the workmen by Hardy and his co-workers in the London Corresponding Society in 1792.

The demonstration of the people was held at Birmingham, in August, at Manchester, in September, and at Glasgow and Leeds, in October. These demonstrations were marked by huge crowds of people assembling on some moor without the city limits, a march-past by the trades unions before Bright, and an address by Bright in the largest hall of the city. A contemporary has thus described the demonstration at Glasgow: "During the Reform agitation of 1832, a large assemblage of Reformers, numbering about 70,000, met together on Glasgow Green; and this morning (1866) a similar meeting, only of twice the size, estimated at 150,000 persons, assembled on the same spot, under the auspices of the Reform League, to pass resolutions in favour of another Reform Bill. A large Trades procession, containing 30,000 persons, was formed on the Green at eleven o'clock, and marched thence through the principal streets of Glasgow and back again to the starting point, where from various platforms several meetings were held simultaneously, and resolutions in favour of Reform adopted. Mr. Bright, M. P., who had accepted an invitation to address the inhabitants of Glasgow at an evening meeting, witnessed the procession from the window of the Cobden Hotel in Argyll Street. As the procession and the immense crowd that accompanied it passed by the Hotel, repeated cheers were given for Mr. Bright, who bowed acknowledgments. Flags and banners of the Glasgow colours floated from the windows on every side along the route of the procession. Business in the city was almost entirely suspended throughout the day and almost every shop was closed. Each trade carried numerous flags. The cabinet-makers of Glasgow marched under the inscription, 'The

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360. Note.

people should be the cabinet-makers.' One of the flags bore a huge coloured portrait of Mr. Gladstone, and a companion picture representing Mr. Bright on another flag bore the inscription, 'Honour Bright,'<sup>34</sup>

It was at Glasgow that Bright gave his most comprehensive statement of his principles on democracy and showed its close relation with the growing social forces of the time. He clearly marked out the ends for which democracy was seeking political power and the social changes which were likely to follow its victory. He struck the clear note of social justice and held that privilege and class selfishness could only be curbed by the ascendancy of the people's representatives in the House of Commons; that the present system "does not represent the intelligence and the justice of the nation, but the prejudices, the privileges, and the selfishness of a class." "What are the results of this system of legislation? Some of them have been touched upon in that address which has been so kindly presented to me. You refer to the laws affecting land. Are you aware that half the land of England is in the possession of fewer than one hundred and fifty men? Are you aware of the fact that half the land in Scotland is in the possession of not more than ten or twelve men? Are you aware of the fact that the monopoly in land in the United Kingdom is growing constantly more and more close? And the result of it is this—the gradual extirpation of the middle class as owners of land, and the constant degradation of the tillers of the soil."

Referring to the pauperism in the United Kingdom at that time numbering 1,200,000, he claimed that it could not be cured by benevolence, but only justice and that "justice was impossible from a class. It is most certain and easy from a nation." And then he went on to say, in words which burnt themselves into the souls of his hearers, "I am of opinion that the rich people of a country, invested with power, and speaking generally for rich people alone, cannot sufficiently care for the multitude and the poor. They are personally kind enough, but they do not care for the people in the bulk. They have read a passage in Holy Writ that 'The poor ye have always with you'—and therefore they imagine that it is a providential arrangement that a small section of the people should be rich and powerful, and the great mass of the people should be hard-working and poor. It is a long distance from castles, and mansions, and great houses, and abounding luxuries, to the condition of the great mass of the

<sup>34</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 362. Note.

people who have no property, and too many of whom are always on the verge of poverty. We know very well all of us how much we are influenced by the immediate circumstances by which we are surrounded. The rich find everything just as they like. The country needs no reform. There is no other country in the world so pleasant for rich people as this country. But I deny altogether that the rich alone are qualified to legislate for the poor, any more than the poor alone would be qualified to legislate for the rich." And urging the necessity of giving the franchise to the workingmen, he proceeded to show that it would alter the attitude of the wealthier classes towards legislation. "Probably what I call the Botany Bay view of their countrymen would be got rid of, and we should have a sense of greater justice and generosity in the feeling with which they regard the bulk of the nation. . . . The nation would be changed. There would be amongst us a greater growth of everything that is good. . . . The class which has hitherto ruled in this country has failed miserably. It revels in power and wealth, whilst at its feet, a terrible peril for its future, lies the multitude which it has neglected. If a class has failed, let us try the nation." <sup>35</sup>

Early in December the last great demonstration was held in London with a march-past of the trades unions and an address at St. James' Hall. Bright was denounced in the Conservative press and then sneered at as a demagogue. Young Tories spent their time in abusing him and fearing dire calamities to the country; but the public demonstration and the force of the democratic current was carrying some of the leaders over to reform. This, however, was not at first apparent. Even Gladstone had been startled by Bright's campaign and disliked some of his utterances. Gladstone had been out of the country, spending the time of the recess of Parliament in Italy and he had written in October to the party whip, Mr. Brand, "I do not like what I see of Bright's speeches. We have no claim upon him, more than the government have on us; and I imagine he will part company the moment he sees his way to more than we would give him." <sup>36</sup>

Bright, however, was not oblivious to the effect of his political campaign. The political agitation for democracy had set in motion forces which would end in revolution, unless the government and Parliament took up the question of reform. As in 1832, the spirit of democracy, once aroused could not be quieted, save by acceding to its demands. Just before his great address at St.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 366-68.

<sup>36</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 223.

James' Hall in December, Bright wrote as to the danger of the present situation, "If the thing goes off well and in great force it will help the Derby Conspiracy in their deliberations, and Walpole's tears will be shed amid the sighs of his colleagues. I do not think Bob Lowe can now do a government much good—and I suspect there will not be much cheering during the next session if he repeats his venomous attacks on the unenfranchised. It will not need much more of his statesmanship to drive the people to a new and dangerous policy. It would be easy to induce many scores of thousands of men to provide themselves with arms—to form something like a great national volunteer force, which, without breaking the law, would place the peace of the country on a soil hot with volcanic fire. It is impossible after what has happened in America and in Germany—with a wide suffrage extending everywhere—that 84 out of 100 of our countrymen should be content to be excluded from the franchise, and with a system so scandalous and fraudulent as to create a parliament, more than half of whose members are returned by 3 per cent of the grown men in the kingdom. This cannot last, and if a remedy is not found and applied peaceably, by some accident it will come with violence and great calamity to the upholders of what now exists. I am not responsible for what may come, any more than I am for an outburst from the bowels of Etna or Vesuvius. They are responsible who despise and insult five millions of their fellow-countrymen, and who rejoice in and applaud the statesmanship of Bob Lowe."<sup>37</sup>

Disraeli had not been blind to the signs of the times and was working behind the scenes in the seclusion of the cabinet over a Reform Bill which he hoped would still the tempest. While his followers of the Conservative party were abusing Bright and pouring scorn upon the claims of the workingmen, Disraeli was contemplating a step which would lead his party to reverse all their principles against reform. He was too keen a statesman not to recognise that reform must be settled by the present Parliament and he did not wish to have the Conservative party repeat the mistake of 1846 and be thrown into opposition for a long period.

The House of Commons met in February in a chaotic condition with regard to the alignment of parties. Gladstone was the leader of the opposition with a majority in the House, but unable to use its power through defection of the Whig minority.

<sup>37</sup> Trevelyan, "Life of John Bright," p. 364.

The Conservatives were also divided, and the rumours of a Reform Bill served to accentuate these differences.

Bright notes these conditions in his journal—"Position very curious. Tory party in chaos. Cabinet divided—party divided—its members speaking openly of the anarchy that prevails. Conversation with Disraeli in the lobby."<sup>38</sup> This conversation established a relation between Disraeli and Bright and they talked over the principles of a Reform Bill and the difficulties which such a measure would encounter. A few days later, March 9th, Bright sent Disraeli a confidential statement on "Suggestions on the coming Reform Bill" in which he advocated household suffrage in the boroughs, and in the counties a £10 to £12 occupation franchise.

Some days before this, the discussion of reform in the cabinet had led to a division and the resignation of some of the members. Bright notes—"Government in a crisis, General Peel, Lords Cranborne and Carnarvon resigned; they object to Reform as urged by Disraeli; excitement in political circles. I seem to feel it less than others, but am deeply concerned in the evident progress the Reform question is making." The next day, March 4th, "House Ministerial crisis. The three Secretaries of State resigned; their places easily filled up, and the Government will attempt to go on. Derby and Disraeli intend to propose and carry a Reform Bill. Great interest excited. Wonderful conversions to Household Suffrage on every side. I begin to be an authority with the Tory party. What next?"<sup>39</sup>

Disraeli had begun his work for reform by feeling out the temper of the House by a series of resolutions which did not strike at the heart of the real issue. When he told the House that reform should no longer be allowed to decide the fate of cabinets, the House laughed, but his attitude served to break up his cabinet. Under pressure from Mr. Gladstone, he finally laid before the House his Reform Bill, on March 18th. Its provisions were curious and marked a mingling of conservative and radical principles. He suggested special franchises for various classes; men with university degrees or members of the learned professions, or those who had £30 in the savings banks, or £50 in the funds, or paid a pound in direct taxes should have votes; but he also proposed to give the franchise to householders who paid rates. A redistribution of seats was part of the bill. As a con-

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 372.

cession to the prejudices of his party, he proposed a double vote to classes of rich citizens and imposed a strict term of residence.

Mr. Gladstone now advocated complete opposition to the bill and held that the concessions of the franchise were illusory. A meeting of 278 Liberals was held to determine the action of the party in regard to the bill; and against the judgment of Gladstone and Bright, they voted, through fear of a dissolution, to allow the bill to go on and it passed the second reading without a division. The centre of interest in the bill gathered around the question of conferring the franchise upon the householders who paid rates. Mr. Gladstone, on April 12th, proposed an amendment that the householder should be allowed the franchise whether he paid the rate direct or through his landlord. These latter were known as compounded householders. The amendment was defeated the next day by a vote of 289 to 310; 40 Liberal members had voted with the government and 20 were absent. By this defeat, Gladstone was filled with "disgust and mortification" and he seriously contemplated resigning his leadership of the Whig party and retiring to the back benches. Fortunately for the cause of reform, he was dissuaded from this step. However, he went off to the country and gave up for the time his opposition to the bill.

While Gladstone was harassed by the criticism and opposition of members of his own party, he was loyally supported by Bright who took occasion in an address at Birmingham to pay this tribute to Gladstone's earnestness for reform: "Who is there in the House of Commons who equals Mr. Gladstone in knowledge of all political questions? Who equals him in earnestness? Who equals him in eloquence? Who equals him in courage and fidelity to his convictions? If these gentlemen who say they will not follow him have any one who is his equal, let them show him. If they can point out any statesman who can add dignity and grandeur to the stature of Mr. Gladstone, let them produce him."<sup>40</sup>

At the beginning of May, the Reform League determined to hold a demonstration at Hyde Park, and as the government did not dare to forbid it, the meeting was a great success and passed off peaceably; but it caused so much criticism in Conservative circles, that the Home Secretary resigned. Disraeli was triumphant in the House of Commons and the Whigs seemed to be waging a losing battle. But on May 11th, Bright went to see Gladstone and proposed as an amendment to the bill that

<sup>40</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 233.

every householder should be compelled to pay his rates personally and not to his landlord. This would do away with the "compounding" for rates. This important amendment was decided on and Mr. Hodgkinson was delegated to propose it. It was expected that the amendment would be defeated, but to the astonishment of all, Disraeli rose and accepted the amendment. The effect of this was to give the bill a true household franchise in the boroughs and to carry out the plan of reform which Bright had proposed in 1858 and about which he had written to Disraeli on March 1st. This practically ended the struggle and Bright notes its effect in these words, "Government accepted our demands on Borough Franchise."

The bill passed its third reading of July 15th amid cheering from the Whig opposition. Lowe uttered a final protest against the bill and Lord Cranborne expressed his bitter disdain for the policy of Disraeli. He "deplored that the House should have applauded a policy of legerdemain; talked about borrowing their ethics from the political adventurer; regretted, above all things, that the Reform Bill should have been purchased at the cost of a political betrayal that had no parallel in our parliamentary annals, and that struck at the very root of that mutual confidence which is the very soul of our party government."<sup>41</sup>

The bill passed the House of Lords in August with an amendment of minor importance. Lord Derby consoled himself by speaking of its effect in "dishing the Whigs"; but its passage marked the end of a great movement of democracy which had been growing in power and momentum during twenty years and had reached that stage that it could no longer be withstood without serious consequences to the future of the aristocracy and upper classes in England. The bill marked the advent of democracy in the boroughs and the passing of the political power to the workingmen of Great Britain. The vote by ballot had to await the Liberal administration which came with the return of Gladstone to office through the result of the elections of 1868. During his administration of six years many Liberal measures were passed and the new influence of the working classes was seen in this legislation.

By 1873, Gladstone had exhausted his Liberal programme and had moved too fast for the country to follow him. Many of his bills had encountered serious opposition and especially his Education Act, which had alienated the Nonconformists from the Liberal party. The government was defeated by three votes and

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

resigned; but as Disraeli refused to assume office with a hostile majority, the Liberal Ministry came back, but with a weakened power. Finally Gladstone dissolved Parliament in January 1874 and appealed to the country. The elections took place amid a strong reaction and the Dissenters turned against the Liberals. The Tories carried the counties with 145 members to 27 Liberals; and even the boroughs in some instances went against the Liberal cause; London and Westminster went Tory by enormous majorities. In England and Wales the Tory majority was 105; in Great Britain, 83.

Disraeli came back to power and in a short time assumed the title of Lord Beaconsfield. Now commenced a policy of British imperialism by which the queen was made Empress of India, the British fleet was sent to the Dardanelles to check the advance of the Russians upon Constantinople in 1877, and Beaconsfield won a diplomatic triumph at the Congress of Berlin. Gladstone, on his defeat at the elections, had resigned the leadership of the Liberal party and had gone into retirement; but the Bulgarian atrocities of 1876 had roused his indignation and he wrote a series of articles to the country against them. When Beaconsfield opposed the Russian advance and allied England to the Turk, the indignation of Gladstone broke forth and the issue of the election of 1880 turned upon the foreign policy of Beaconsfield. In this election Gladstone came again to the front and became the leader of the hosts of democracy. In November 1879, he went to Scotland to start his Midlothian campaign, and his journey from Liverpool, he says, "was really more like a triumphal procession." At every station where the train stopped, he was greeted with shouting crowds. At Carlisle, he was presented with an address and he made a speech in which he said that in the eleven elections in which he had taken part, none had greater interests at stake for the good of the country. When he arrived at Edinburgh, he was met by Lord Rosebery and they traversed Princes Street through an immense crowd, "its whole length was crowded as it has never been crowded before or since by a dense multitude," and amid the tumult of enthusiasm he arrived at the home of Lord Rosebery. In the exciting days which followed, Gladstone made many addresses at Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other places, and everywhere he was received with unbounded enthusiasm and listened to with rapt attention when he indicted the domestic and foreign policy of the administration of Beaconsfield. Men had come from all over Scotland to hear him, even from the distant islands of the Hebrides. It was the



tribute of the people to the popular hero and to the champion of the cause of democracy. "Over what a space had democracy travelled," writes Morley, "and what a transition for its champion of the hour, since the days half a century back when the Christ Church undergraduate, the disciple of Burke and Canning, had ridden in anti-reform processions, been hustled by reform mobs, and prayed for the blessing of heaven on the House of Lords for their honourable and manly decision in throwing out the bill. Yet the warmest opponent of popular government, even the Duke of Buccleuch himself, might have found some balm for this extraordinary display of popular feeling, in the thought that it was a tribute to the most splendid political career of that generation, and that it was repaid, moreover, with none of the flattery associated with the name of demagogue."<sup>42</sup>

The popular demonstrations of the Midlothian campaign were watched with exultation on one side and with dread and fear on the other. Gladstone's political opponents discounted what they call his "verbosity and its danger to the commonwealth"; and they held such popular meetings were an innovation upon the constitution and "aggravated the evil tendencies of democracy." Gladstone's return journey was marked with the same enthusiasm. Parliament was dissolved in March 1880, and Gladstone set out for Edinburgh on the 16th on the election campaign. On his journey north through the towns of the east coast, he encountered the same enthusiasm as he received four months before from the people on the west coast. He had a fortnight of speaking, everywhere attended by immense crowds. His last speech on April 2d expressed the principles of his appeal to the voters. He pointed out that the aristocracy, the clergy, and the wealth of the nation were combined to defeat the forces of the nation as expressed in the new democracy. He said: "The great trial, gentlemen, proceeds. You have great forces arrayed against you. I say 'you' if you will permit me to identify myself with you. I will say, we have great forces arrayed against us, and apparently we cannot make our appeal to the aristocracy, excepting that which must never be forgotten, the distinguished and enlightened minority of that body of able, energetic, patriotic, liberal-minded men, whose feelings are with those of the people, and who decorate and dignify their rank by their strong sympathy with the entire community. With that exception, in all the classes of which I speak, I am sorry to say we cannot reckon upon what is called the landed interests, we cannot reckon upon

<sup>42</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 588.

the clergy of the established church either in England or in Scotland, subject again and always in each case to the most noble exceptions—exceptions, I trust, likely to enlarge and multiply from day to day. On none of these can we place our trust. We cannot reckon on the wealth of the country, nor upon the rank of the country, nor upon the influence which rank and wealth usually bring. In the main these powers are against us, for wherever there is a close corporation, wherever there is a spirit of organised monopoly, wherever there is a narrow and sectional interest apart from that of the country, and desiring to be set up above the interest of the public, there, gentlemen, we, the liberal party, have no friendship and no tolerance to expect.” “Above all these, and behind all these, there is something greater than these—there is the nation itself. This great trial is now proceeding before the nation. . . . That verdict we await. We have none of the forms of a judicial trial. There are no peers in Westminster Hall, there are no judges on the woolsack; but if we concentrate our minds upon the truth of the case apart from its mere exterior, it is a grander and more august spectacle than was ever exhibited in Westminster Hall or in the House of Lords.” For a nation, called to undertake a great and responsible duty,—a duty which is to tell, as we are informed from high authority, on the peace of Europe and on the destinies of England,—has found its interests mismanaged, its honour tarnished, and its strength burdened and weakened by needless, mischievous, unauthorised, and unprofitable engagements, and it has resolved that this state of things shall cease, and that right and justice shall be done.”<sup>43</sup>

The verdict was rendered within two weeks and resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Liberal party and the democratic cause. Gladstone won the seat for Midlothian; the Liberal majority in England and Wales was 75 and 44 in Scotland. In the counties, the stronghold of conservatism, where no reform had taken place in the electorate, the Tories carried the elections by 124 to 63. In the boroughs of London, the Liberals beat the Tories by 14 to 8; but in the City of London, the centre of finance and wealth, the Tories elected both members. The new Parliament was composed of 347 Liberals, 240 Conservatives, and 65 Nationalists, so that the Liberals had a handsome majority over a combination of Conservatives and Nationalists. Such a crushing defeat of the Beaconsfield administration meant the end of Conservative rule for some years to come. Under the demand

<sup>43</sup> Morley, “Life of Gladstone,” Vol. II, p. 611.

of the popular voice, Gladstone assumed the leadership of the Liberal party and formed the new ministry much against the expressed desire of the queen. As Morley says, "Whatever liberty of choice the theory of our constitution assigned to the Queen, in practice this choice did not now exist." <sup>44</sup>

The great hopes based upon this Liberal victory were destined to be disappointed through a question on religious liberty, the aggravation of Ireland's discontent, and the emergence of the Home Rulers under Parnell, and the foreign policy of intervention in Egypt. But it was recognised that a reform of the county constituencies was one of the questions which must be decided by this Parliament before dissolution. Trevelyan had brought the issue of county reform into Parliament in 1876 on the same lines as it was finally adopted in 1884. In 1877, a great meeting was held at Exeter Hall, London, of delegates from the Associations of agricultural labourers and attended by forty members of Parliament. The same year household suffrage for the counties was advocated by Lord Hartington and adopted by 220 Liberal members, practically committing the party to this reform. On February 28, 1884, Gladstone brought in his Bill of County Reform. The extent of this reform was well illustrated by Gladstone in his introductory speech, "In 1832 there was passed what was considered a Magna Charta of British liberties; but that Magna Charta of British liberties added, according to the previous estimate of Lord John Russell, 500,000, while according to the results considerably less than 500,000 were added to the entire constituency of the three countries. After 1832 we come to 1866. At that time the total constituency of the United Kingdom reached 1,364,000. By the bills which were passed between 1867 and 1869 that number was raised to 2,448,000. Under the action of the present law the constituency has reached in round numbers what I would call 3,000,000. This bill, if it passes as presented, will add to the English constituency over 1,300,000 persons. It will add to the Scotch constituency, Scotland being at present rather better provided in this respect than either of the other countries, over 200,000, and to the Irish constituency over 400,000; or in the main, to the present aggregate constituency of the United Kingdom taken at 3,000,000 it will add 2,000,000 more, nearly twice as much as was added since 1867, and more than four times as much as was added in 1832." <sup>45</sup>

The bill was carried on the second reading by a majority of

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol II, p. 619.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol III, p. 125.

340 to 210; and on the third reading the opposition had disappeared so that Gladstone claimed that it was carried by an unanimous verdict. It was sent up to the Lords and it was held up by a majority of 59 peers. The Lords refused to pass the bill unless it was accompanied by a redistribution of seats. The Conservatives feared that unless this took place, the elections under the new franchise would be ruinous to their party. This objection by the Lords was denounced as an effort to kill the franchise. Gladstone denounced this manœuvre in scathing words, "I do not hesitate to say that those who are opposing us, and making use of this topic of redistribution of seats as a means of defeating the franchise bill, know as well as we do that, had we been such idiots and such dolts as to present to Parliament a bill for the combined purpose, or to bring in two bills for the two purposes as one measure—I say, they know as well as we do, that a disgraceful failure would have been the result of our folly, and that we should have been traitors to you, and to the cause we had in hand." <sup>46</sup>

The controversy was now carried from Parliament to the platform and the street. A vigorous agitation was set in motion against the House of Lords. Bright launched into a campaign against the Lords and urged that a limitation should be placed on the veto power of the House of Lords, and he formulated the proposals for giving this effect which were afterwards adopted in the great conflict between the Lords and the House of Commons in 1911. "The proposition that I should make would be this: that they should have, unimpaired, all the power they have now with regard to any bill that has passed the House of Commons during the session in which the Lords are called upon to deal with it. That is, in the case of this Bill they would be at liberty to amend it, and send it back to the Commons. If the Commons did not like the amendments, and would not accept them, the Bill would go back to the Lords, and if they chose they might reject it. But, in the second session, if practically the same Bill was sent up to the Lords, they would then also have a right to debate and to amend; but when the Bill came down to the House of Commons in this second session, and the Commons would not agree to the amendments of the Lords, then the Lords should be bound to accept the Bill." <sup>47</sup>

But further agitation was found to be unnecessary, as negotiations were opened between the two parties through the in-

<sup>46</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. III, p. 127.

<sup>47</sup> "Life of John Bright," p. 440.

fluence of the queen, which resulted in an understanding that the Franchise Bill should be passed and a Redistribution Bill satisfactory to both the Liberal and Conservative leaders. But the controversy had once more shown the Lords to the country as standing in opposition to the rising tide of democracy and only giving way when they were overwhelmed by the popular enthusiasm and demand for reform. The Lords had to learn again as in 1832 that when the issue of the franchise had been once raised, it was bound to go on to its logical conclusion and that the popular demand of democracy bore down all obstacles and moved forward with irresistible power to its destined end. In the Reform Bill of 1884, democracy attained its high-water mark; and from this time on, the legislation of Great Britain began to assume the spirit and character of the democracy slowly becoming conscious of its strength until at last it came to dominate Parliament and dictate legislation in its own interest.

## CHAPTER IX

### DEMOCRACY DOMINATING PARLIAMENT

THE effect of the Reform Bill of 1867 was immediately seen in the change of the character of the legislation. In the election of 1868, Gladstone was returned to power with a large Liberal majority and at once proceeded to introduce legislation in sympathy with the new Liberal spirit and in recognition of the new electorate of the working classes. This legislation took the form of Acts for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, Reform of the Army and Civil Service, and the Land Act of 1870. But more important for the labouring classes were the bills, providing for a Vote by Ballot, the Education Act, and the legal status of Trade Unions.

The vote by secret ballot had long been recognised as one of the cardinal principles of the workingmen's demands. It had been advocated in the reform agitation of 1832, but had been rejected. It had been revived in the People's Charter and formed one of the six demands. With the extension of the franchise, it was recognised that the new freedom granted to the working classes would be futile unless it was accompanied with the secret ballot. Bright in 1868 had said: "Whether I look to the excessive cost of elections, or to the tumult which so often attends them, or to the unjust and cruel pressure which is so frequently brought to bear upon the less independent class of voters, I am persuaded that the true interest of the public and of freedom will be served by the system of secret and free voting."<sup>1</sup>

In 1870 a bill providing for vote by ballot, abolishing public nominations and dealing with corrupt practices in parliamentary elections was introduced by Lord Hartington, but it was received with little enthusiasm and was not pressed. However, the principle had been established and the government had committed itself to it. Later in the session, when another bill to the same effect was introduced by a private member, Gladstone, who had previously been opposed to voting by ballot, changed his opinion and seized the occasion to say, "Now that great numbers had acquired the vote, their freedom was threatened from many

<sup>1</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. II, p. 367.

quarters. • The secret vote appeared to be required by the social conditions under which they lived, and therefore it had become a necessity and a duty to give effect to the principle.”<sup>2</sup>

The bill was passed by the House of Commons by a large majority, but it at once encountered opposition in the House of Lords who threw out the bill on the ground that “it was novel, it was dangerous, it had not been considered by the country, it was incoherent and contradictory, and to enact vote by ballot was inevitably to overthrow the monarchy.”<sup>3</sup>

This action led to a controversy between the two Houses of Parliament and raised a great outcry in the country. Gladstone hinted at a dissolution of Parliament and an appeal to the people; and under this pressure the Lords gave way and finally passed the bill.

The second measure was the Education Act which aimed to educate the masses. Heretofore education had been carried on by voluntary schools or schools under the control of the Church. The new act was not to supersede the old system, but to supplement it; but this feature of the act prevented a national settlement. The bill carried a large measure of reform and made it possible that half the nation which had been excluded under the old system should have the opportunity of receiving an education.

Unfortunately the twenty-fifth section of the Education Act enabled school boards to pay to “denominational schools the fees of parents who, though not paupers, were unable to pay them”; under cover of this section the possibility of a sectarian board subsidising church schools was clear, and roused the ire of the Nonconformists and threw them out of sympathy with Mr. Gladstone with disastrous results in the ensuing election of 1874. But these two measures were a witness to the growing power of the new democracy. The representatives of labour in Parliament belonged to the radical wing of the Liberal Party which had no real consciousness of the immense power that had been unchained in giving the franchise to the workingmen of the boroughs. Sir William Harcourt might say that “we must educate our masters”; but there was no realisation either in the Conservative or in the Liberal parties that the Labour forces would prove to be anything more than a tail to the party kite. However, a few of the Labour leaders began to perceive that Labour would receive little recognition for its demands so long as it was content to fallow in the wake of the old parties; hence they de-

<sup>2</sup> Morley, “Life of Gladstone,” Vol. II, p. 368.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 369.

terminated to break away from their party affiliations and to elect men from their own class to Parliament.

Before the passing of the Reform Bill of 1867, this idea had taken shape in the organisation of the London Workingmen's Association and in the election of 1868, it had supported two of its members for Parliament; but they were opposed by a Liberal member who divided the vote of the constituency. After this defeat, an attempt was made to organise the Labour vote along better lines. In 1869, the Labour Representative League was formed and it supported Mr. George Odger in the constituency of Southwark, but he was defeated through the opposition of a Liberal candidate. The Liberal party seemed determined to crush any opposition within its own lines; but in 1874, the League contested a dozen seats and succeeded in electing two members, Mr. T. Burt and Mr. Alexander MacDonald, a victory which opened the eyes of the Liberals and they became more sympathetic with the aspirations of Labour.

Even the Conservative party under Lord Beaconsfield was not oblivious to the demands of the working classes. He recognised that they were desirous for better working conditions and more comforts in their lives. To meet these desires, he passed through Parliament the Artisan Dwelling Act of 1875 and the Act for the regulation of Friendly Societies, and two Factory Acts for the better regulation of workingmen's organisations.

These concessions to Labour, however, did not shake the determination of the Labour leaders to elect their own members. While the mass of the workingmen were aligned with the Liberal party and were not as yet conscious of their power, yet the League in the election of 1880 succeeding in returning three members to Parliament. This election proved a great school of education for the working classes. The trend of the times was working in their favour. Between 1880 and 1885, there had been a great social ferment in the political world. Many things had conspired to bring this about. The ideas of socialism as interpreted by Karl Marx had been preached to the working classes by Hyndman who formed the Social Democratic Federation in 1883. At about the same time the Fabian Society had been organised by Mr. Sydney Webb with the aim of applying socialism to politics; and the Independent Labour party had been suggested by James Keir Hardie with the idea of discrediting the old parties and organising Labour as a separate political force.

In 1884, Gladstone brought forward his great Reform Bill and carried it through in spite of the House of Lords in 1885, though



forced to compromise on the measure by agreeing to a redistribution of seats. During this controversy, Bright made his famous speech on mend or end the House of Lords. Both parties were becoming more and more conscious of the power of Labour as a vital factor in the political world and were making bids to secure the Labour vote. Lord Randolph Churchill organised within the Conservative party what he called the Tory democracy and Joseph Chamberlain of Birmingham, the radical leader and organiser of the Birmingham caucus, was angling for the workman's electorate by proclaiming a radical programme which went beyond the ideas of Gladstone and threatened a split in the Liberal party of the Whig section under Lord Hartington. In January 1885, Chamberlain, in a speech at Ipswich, said, "that this country had been called the paradise of the rich, and warned his audience no longer to allow it to remain the purgatory of the poor. He told them that reform of local government must be almost the first reform of the next parliament, and spoke in favour of allotments, the creation of small properties, the placing of a small tax on the total property of the taxpayers, and of free education."<sup>4</sup>

A few days later at Birmingham, he went much further in his radical programme and advocated the abolition of plural voting, the payment of members, and manhood suffrage. "He also advocated a bill for enabling local communities to acquire land, a graduated income-tax, and the breaking up of the great estates as the first step in land reform."<sup>5</sup>

Gladstone was much disturbed by this programme; for it foreshadowed a division in the cabinet and he thought it premature to raise such questions which could only become practical in the next Parliament.

The policies of Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill were far-reaching in their influence upon the history of both parties. As Morley says, "The same general forces of the hour, working through the energy, ambition, and initiative of individuals, produced the same effect in each of the two parties; the radical programme of Mr. Chamberlain was matched by the Tory democracy of Lord Randolph Churchill; each saw that the final transfer of power from the ten pound householder to artisans and labourers would rouse new social demands; each was aware that Ireland was the electoral pivot of the day, and while one of them was wrestling with those whom he stigmatised as Whigs,

<sup>4</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. III, p. 173.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174.

the other by dexterity and resolution overthrew his leaders as the 'old gang.'"<sup>6</sup>

The result of this bidding for the Labour vote was seen in the outcome of the election of 1885 when the Liberals elected 333 members and the Conservatives 251; but the Irish Home Rulers with 86 members held the balance of power and in combination with the Conservatives could overcome the Liberal majority. The situation brought on the Irish crisis, and, in the bidding for the Irish vote, Gladstone became the champion of Home Rule for Ireland. Moreover, in the election, the Labour party had elected eleven members, six of whom were from the mining districts.

Gladstone, who had always had his eye on the progress of Labour and its growing power, at once gave it recognition by making Henry Broadhurst, one of its leaders and his chief lieutenant in marshalling the Labour vote in the Liberal party, Under-Secretary in 1886; but the defeat of the Liberal Ministry the same year on the Irish Home Rule Bill arrested any further efforts in this direction.

In the meantime, at the Trades Union Congress in 1886, Threlfall formulated the principles of the Labour Electoral Association in a statement which marked the new consciousness of Labour in its increasing power. He said, "This Congress views with satisfaction the growing intelligence of the masses to recognise in their emancipation the power they possess to demand the inalienable right of men in making laws to which they have to subscribe; and in order to give practical effect to the various Labour Representations it is essential to form an Electoral Labour Committee which shall act in conjunction with the Parliamentary Committee, the Labour Representatives in the House of Commons, and the friends of Labour Representation throughout the country."<sup>7</sup>

This resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority, but in view of the fact that the Independent Labour and Socialistic parties were making desperate appeals to secure the working-class vote, the Labour Association decided to co-operate with the Liberals.

Keir Hardie had thrown out the idea of an Independent Labour party some years before and this idea now began to take practical shape in the minds of some of the working-class leaders. In 1888, the Scottish Labour party was formed under the leader-

<sup>6</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. III, p. 200.

<sup>7</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 224.

ship of Cuninghame Graham and Keir Hardie and adopted an extensive programme. Among its demands were adult suffrage, triennial Parliaments, payment of members, Home Rule for each nationality, abolition of the House of Lords, nationalisation of land and minerals, state insurance for sickness, accident, death, or old age; state acquisition of railways, waterways, and tramways. National banking system, and the issue of state money only; cumulative income tax, beginning at £300 per annum.

At the time, such a programme awoke no sympathy either in the Liberal or Conservative parties; and Keir Hardie pointed out in a manifesto that neither party had any idea of passing any legislation which would lead to any marked improvement in the living conditions of labour. "Some may argue," it said, "that by and by the so-called 'party of progress' will adopt labour reforms as part of its policy, as it has adopted Home Rule for Ireland. Our reply is that when men die of hunger, as they are doing to-day, no delay can be permitted, and that if the workers of Scotland want labour legislation they must, as the Irish have done, form themselves into a concrete political party, and give the other political parties no rest or peace until their demands are conceded. The first step to this end is the formation of a distinct, separate, and Independent Labour party, which will rally at the polls the forces of the workers and of those who sympathise with our efforts."<sup>8</sup>

But an event occurred which gave these ideas an impetus and a momentum which was totally unexpected: the London docker's strike of 1889. This strike started with the match girls and casual labourers at the London docks who were unorganised and who had received no encouragement from organised labour. The strike was conducted under the able leadership of John Burns and Tom Mann and awoke public sympathy because it revealed the wretched conditions under which the workers were living. The winning of the strike had an effect far beyond anything that its leaders contemplated, or that the casual labourers perceived; for most of the dockers were concerned only with the extra sixpence a day. It revealed the power of labour for collective action and its ability to win better working conditions when supported by public sympathy. "The docker's strike," writes Sir George Askwith, "from the various accounts of it, marked a great epoch in the relations of Capital and Labour. It gave a great impulse to the Labour movement."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>9</sup> Askwith, "Industrial Problems and Disputes," p. 74.

The first result was an increase in Labour organisations and then the formation of the Independent Labour party at Bradford in 1890. This party entered the contest of some seats in the election of 1892 and Keir Hardie and John Burns were returned to Parliament with thirteen other Labour members. At the same time the Liberals returned to power, but with its majority dependent upon the Irish members. But the election of 1892 had a great significance in that it marked the beginning of the emergence of the working classes into self-conscious power with definite aims and ideals.

Lord Randolph Churchill, with a far-seeing vision of the political future, wrote in a letter to a friend at this time, "that the contests which Labour was now carrying on were significant and instructive. It had freed itself to a great extent from the mere mechanism of party politics. Its struggle was no longer for wages, but for political power. Labour was now seeking to do for itself what the landed interests and the manufacturing capitalist interests did for themselves, when each in turn commanded the disposition of State policy. The land laws were framed by the landed interest, for their own advantage. Political power passed very considerably from the landed to the manufacturing capitalist interests, and the fiscal system was shaped by this latter power to its own advantage, foreign politics also being made to coincide. The nation was coming fast to a time when Labour laws would be made by the Labour interests for the advantage of Labour, but it had to face strong and numerous forces—social, professional, and journalistic—and the many prejudices and resources which these forces could array against it."<sup>10</sup>

This new spirit of Labour was seen, three years later, in the re-organisation of the Independent Labour party at Bradford in 1893 where 120 delegates, under the leadership of Keir Hardie, assembled, including a few delegates from the Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society. The new organisation proposed to have a policy of its own and to send its own representatives to Parliament. But the new party did not make much headway with the working classes. It served, however, to blaze a path that would be trodden later by Labour in its march to power.

Meanwhile the Liberal party was not oblivious of the claims of the Labour element in its own ranks. Occupied at first with the Home Rule Bill, it turned its attention later to other legisla-

<sup>10</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 301.

tion and passed a bill making employers liable for accidents and a Parish Council Bill which democratised the elections in the parishes; both bills were mutilated by the House of Lords and deprived of much of their efficacy. On Gladstone's retirement the party was much torn with internal dissensions owing to differences between the followers of Lord Rosebery and those of Sir William Harcourt. The latter passed through the House of Commons a bill which increased the death duties and marked the beginning of levying taxes of this character. Then in 1895 the ministry was defeated over the naval estimates. Parliament was dissolved and an appeal was made to the country where the Liberals suffered a crushing defeat at the poll and the Conservatives returned to power with a large majority. The defeat was not only disastrous to the Liberal Labour members in Parliament, but also to the Independent Labour party. It had put into the field twenty-eight candidates, all of whom had been defeated, including Keir Hardie, who lost his seat at South-West Ham. But in the municipal elections the party was more successful, and it polled a strong vote in some of the by-elections which forecasted later a triumph at the polls.

The Conservative party, while opposed to the demands of Labour as expressed in the radical movement, yet was forced to face the labour question by constant strikes which aggravated the relations between capital and labour. In 1896, the government passed the Conciliation Act which aimed at "settling disputes between employers and workmen by conciliation or arbitration to be registered with the Board of Trade." The act was a step in the right direction, but as its powers were limited, its influence did not extend far; but it was useful later under the wise interpretation of Sir George Askwith in leading to the settlement of many industrial disputes. However, the Conservative party was not seriously concerned with Labour conditions and had no vision for the new forces which were slowly emerging in the Labour world. In 1897-8 strikes among the engineers and the Welsh miners resulted disastrously for both organisations and Labour seemed to be beaten at every point. A decision of the court against picketting and the freedom of collective responsibility seemed to strike at the Trade Union Acts of 1871 and 1876. These adverse conditions forced upon the Labour leaders the conviction that they could make no progress, unless they entered into the political arena and formed a separate party to enforce their demands. To this end a resolution was

introduced at the Trade Union Congress held at Plymouth in September 1899 to invite the co-operation of all co-operative, socialist, trade union, and other working-class organisations to convene a special congress "to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour members to the next Parliament."

The result was the formation of the Labour party composed of a union of the Parliamentary Committee, the Independent Labour party, the socialist Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society. In the general election of 1900, the party put fifteen candidates into the field and elected two members, one of whom was Keir Hardie. Their success was not great at the by-elections, but the party continued to grow and doubled its membership within two years, a rapid growth due, in a large measure, to the Taff Vale decision which struck at the rights of the trade unionists and crippled their organisation.

This decision grew out of a strike on the Taff Vale Railway in which Mr. Justice Farwell granted an injunction in the lower court against the union leaders from interfering in the strike and held that a society could be sued for the action of its officers. The society appealed to the higher court and the Court of Appeals reversed the decision, holding that a trade union could not be sued in its registered name. The railway company appealed to the House of Lords, where it was decided that Mr. Justice Farwell's decision was correct and that "a Trade Union could be sued, whether registered or unregistered." The railway company then brought action against Bell and Holmes, and the trustees of the society for an injunction and damages, and on December 1902, the case was tried by Jury and the defendants convicted and the society was compelled to pay in damages and costs of litigation, £35,000. Speaking of this decision, Sir George Askwith said, "Strikes might be legal, but strikes under the restrictions laid down by the law became for all practical purposes absolutely illegal and absurd."<sup>11</sup>

The decision raised a storm of protest and resolutions poured in upon Parliament which the government met by appointing a Royal Commission. The Labour world was thrown into a turmoil and Labour demanded pledges from members in every constituency that "Trade Unions should not be subject to the crushing powers of the law."

A determined effort was now made by Labour to obtain a change in the law, which led to a consolidation of its forces and

<sup>11</sup> Askwith, "Industrial Problems and Disputes," p. 94.

contributed in no small degree to bring the Labour party into power by the election of 1906.

In December 1905, the Conservative Government resigned and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman accepted office, and then dissolved Parliament and appealed to the country. The Liberal party put forward a programme of social reform and won a sweeping victory at the polls in January 1906. The Labour party entered the field with fifty candidates of their own, twenty-nine of whom were elected and also fourteen members of the Miner's Federation which was still allied with the Liberal party. The success of Labour at the polls became the sensation of the hour and Liberals and Conservatives alike wondered what it might portend. Heretofore the parties could ignore the claims of Labour, or pass just enough legislation to keep it quiet. Now Labour entered upon a new rôle and from this time onward it became a force dominating the legislation of Parliament.

The Liberal Ministry recognised the new power of Labour by appointing Mr. John Burns president of the Local Government Board; but it was at once confronted at the opening of Parliament by the questions growing out of the Taff Vale decision. The Royal Commission had reported favourably on giving relief to "trade unions for being involved in actions of civil conspiracy"; but Labour was not satisfied with the report of the commission, and though the Attorney-General stood his ground for some time, the government finally threw him over and passed under political pressure the Trades Disputes Act. This act was regarded as the Charter of Liberty by the Labour world, but was much criticised in some sections of society.

"Class feeling on the part of the employers," writes Sir George Askwith, "has been increased by suspicion and anger at its supposed effects, often quite irrationally. The people as a whole have a grudge against presumed privilege being accorded to one section of the community. It was passed under pressure, and believed to be passed for the sake of temporary political advantage. My own opinion is that it has not been as harmful as many suppose."<sup>12</sup>

Whatever be the opinion of the act, its passage revealed the power of Labour in Parliament and the future influence of the democracy over the legislation of the House of Commons. The House of Lords under the leadership of Lord Lansdowne accepted the act, though denouncing its provisions. There was a suspicion that their attitude towards the act was due to a

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

fear that any direct opposition from their House would only serve to inflame the passions of the new democracy and impel it to further demands.

However, the Liberal party were slow in recognising the new claims of Labour and undoubtedly some of the members resented what they called the dictation of Labour in passing the Trades Disputes Act. With this out of the way, the party settled down to a quieter period of legislation. But Labour throughout the country was becoming more and more restive over the inaction of Parliament and the lack of legislation in their interest. This dissatisfaction manifested itself in the strike of the Railway Servants in 1907. And the settlement of this strike through the intervention of the government under the lead of Lloyd George, who was chairman of the Board of Trade, introduced a new element into the situation. Lloyd George belonged to the radical wing of the Liberal party, and in October 1906, he had stood forth as the defender of liberalism as against tariff reformers and socialists. Speaking at Cardiff, he said: "You must remember that up to the present there has been no real effort to counteract the socialist mission among the workmen. When that effort is made you may depend it will find its adherents even among workingmen. Common sense bids Liberals and Labour to get together as far as we can to-day, and not to block the road of progress by standing on it in groups to quarrel about the stage we hope to reach the day after to-morrow. We want the assistance of Labour to give direction to the policy of Liberalism and to give nerve and boldness to its attack. If the able men who now think that they are best serving the cause of progress by trying to shatter Liberalism were to devote their energies and their talents to guide and to strengthen and to embolden Liberalism, they would render higher and more enduring service to progress. But I have one word for Liberals. I can tell them what will make this independent Labour Party movement a great and sweeping force in this country. If at the end of an average term of office it were found that a Liberal Parliament had done nothing to cope seriously with the social condition of the people, to remove the national degradation of slums and wide spread poverty and destitution in a land glittering with wealth, that they had shrunk to attack boldly the main causes of this wretchedness, notably the drink and this vicious land system, that they had not arrested the waste of our national resources in armaments, nor provided an honourable sustenance for deserving old age, that they had tamely allowed the House



of Lords, to extract all the virtue out of their Bills, then would a real cry arise in this land for a new party, and many of us here in this room would join in that cry. But if a Liberal Government tackle the landlords, and the brewers, and the peers, as they have faced the parsons, and try to deliver the nation from the pernicious control of this confederacy of monopolists, then the Independent Labour Party will call in vain upon the workingmen of Britain to desert Liberalism that is gallantly fighting to rid the land of the wrongs that have oppressed those who labour in it."<sup>13</sup> This speech clearly foreshadowed the later policy of the Liberal party; but at the present moment the party had not been won over to the position of Lloyd George on social questions.

The strike of the Railway Servants and the methods by which it was settled are of much value in showing the views held of the position of Labour, within the House and without. The strike threatened a serious dislocation of trade and general distress. To meet this emergency, the Board of Trade under Lloyd George was called upon by the government to interfere. He called together the chairmen of the six principal railway companies and secured their adhesion to a scheme of conciliation and arbitration for settling wages and hours of labour, but gave up the principle of recognition of the delegates of the union. On this basis the strike was settled, but while it was accepted by the men, yet it left behind a dissatisfaction which was to break forth in serious disturbances a few years later.

During this period the government passed an Old Age Pension Act and the next year it passed the Miner's Eight Hour Act. The government was beginning to carry out the programme of social reform as outlined by Lloyd George in his speech at Cardiff. The Labour party was continuing its pressure and its immediate effects were seen in these acts.

This legislation, however, did not satisfy the demands of the younger and more aggressive element of the Labour party in the country and they began to talk of more drastic action through strikes. Many of them broke away from the party and joined either the socialists or the Syndicalists with their programme of "direct action." This spirit underlay the great miner's strike of 1909, which was only settled by the intervention of the government.

The Liberal party had now exhausted its programme of legislation in passing these bills together with the Education Act and

<sup>13</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 348.

Licensing Act of 1907 which had been mutilated by the House of Lords. The old Liberal policy of retrenchment and reform was beginning to lose its hold upon the masses and there were signs that the Conservative party was beginning to recover its hold upon the electorate by its appeals to tariff reform and measures to aid the Tory democracy. The by-elections were showing a direct trend towards conservatism and that party was jubilant that it would soon recover the ground lost in the election of 1906.

Under these circumstances Lloyd George determined on a new appeal to the democracy and dragged the Liberal party along in his new policy of social reform. Both parties were anxious to secure the Labour vote and were putting forward schemes of reform to win the support of the democracy. With this end in view Lloyd George introduced his famous budget of 1909 whose avowed object was to increase the taxation to meet the growing expenses of the new naval demands and of new schemes of social reform. He began his Budget speech by drawing a vivid picture of the hardships of the poor and of the destitution and unemployment which resulted from no fault of their own. Then he pointed out that new forms of taxation must be laid upon the community to meet the growing demands of the social programme which he had outlined. The distinctive features of the Budget were the increase in the income taxes, graduated according to income, an augmentation of the death duties with a super-tax, and finally a new tax on urban and mineral property. It was proposed to "lay a tax on the increment of value accruing to the land from the enterprise of the Community, or the land-owners' neighbours." This tax would amount to 20 per cent on the increase of the present value of land, but would not be retroactive; secondly, a tax on undeveloped land of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. on the pound. Agricultural land to the value of £50 an acre would be exempt from taxation. In the interest of the poor, Lloyd George proposed to remove the tax upon tea and sugar. The balance which would remain after the payment of the expenses of the government and the needs of the new naval estimates, would be used for those schemes of social reform to which he had alluded in the beginning of his speech. His closing words summed up the spirit of the budget: "This is a War Budget. It is for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time when poverty and wretchedness and human degradation which always follow in its camp will be as

remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests." <sup>14</sup>

Mr. Austen Chamberlain, representing the opposition, criticised the Budget "as involving a rearrangement of a great number of our taxes, and involving changes of principles which are of the first magnitude," and characterised it as a "revolutionary measure." <sup>15</sup>

Another Conservative, Sir F. Banbury, said, "For two hours we have listened to every Radical fad which I have ever heard enumerated, but which had nothing to do whatever with the Budget question"; and he called it "the maddest Budget ever introduced into the House of Commons." <sup>16</sup>

Mr. Balfour's comment was that Lloyd George had occupied five hours in the delivery of the Budget speech on which "a preliminary hour had been consumed in a general electioneering manifesto"; and he called attention to the danger to democracy from the abuse of the taxing power and concluded by stating that the tax upon vacant land near towns was not "to get money. I believe it is because he is bitten with certain theories of social and municipal reform." <sup>17</sup>

The attitude of Labour was expressed by Mr. A. Richardson, who said: "We as representing the working classes do not forget, that although that was a rich man's war (Boer War), the working classes were called upon to foot the bill"; after speaking of the taxes on corn, tea, sugar, and export coal, he added, "the taxation was so heavy that those classes connected with the industrial population and especially those men whose incomes were a sovereign a week or under, were forced to work for two weeks in order to pay the tax on the tea and sugar alone . . . I am glad this Budget is one which makes for social reform based upon Free Trade and is not one based upon Protection and Militarism." <sup>18</sup>

Another Labour leader, Mr. Barnes, remarked that these taxes were the "thin edge of the wedge," and would lead to higher land taxes. This statement brought forth the retort from the Conservative side, that "it is this thin edge of the wedge and every man in this committee must know that this new legislation, these new projects in the tax upon undeveloped land and the

<sup>14</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Vol. IV, p. 548.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 550.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 583.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 758.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 590.

tax upon unearned increment, form some of the cardinal principles of Socialism.”<sup>19</sup>

This statement announced the line of opposition which the Conservative party would take towards the Budget. On this line the discussion raged for some months both within and without the House of Commons. The Budget was passed on the second reading by a large majority and the committee stage occupied 42 days of discussion, and finally the Budget was passed at the third reading by a vote of 379 to 149 on November 4, 1909. At this time, the objection by the opposition to the Budget was summed up by Mr. Balfour when he said, “It is a Budget that strikes at the security of property.”<sup>20</sup>

The House of Lords discussed the Budget for a little over a week and then rejected it by an enormous majority. This act was unparalleled in its nature; for no finance bill had been vetoed by the House of Lords for two hundred years. It had come to be the established custom of the country that the House of Lords had no power to reject a financial bill. This rejection by the Lords threw the country into commotion and raised a constitutional question of the first magnitude.

When the bill was returned to the House of Commons, Mr. Asquith moved the following resolution: “That the action of the House of Lords in refusing to pass into law the financial provision made by this House for the service of the year, is a breach of the Constitution and a usurpation of the Rights of the Commons.”<sup>21</sup>

In speaking of this resolution, Mr. Asquith said: “That the House of Commons would not brook the indignity, and I will add, the most arrogant usurpation, to which for more than two centuries, it has been asked to submit.”

After reviewing the relations between the House of Lords and the House of Commons on financial bills, he reminded the House of the resolution passed under the ministry of Campbell-Bannerman in 1907 which advocated limiting the veto power of the House of Lords upon legislation. Mr. Asquith repudiated the suggestion that the Lords had not rejected the Budget, but had only referred it to the people, and then, he added, “The sum and substance of the matter is that the House of Lords rejected the Finance Bill not because they love the people, but because they hate the Budget.”

<sup>19</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Vol. J<sup>V</sup>, p. 975.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, p. 2113.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, pp. 546-7.

This determination of the Liberal party to raise the issue with the House of Lords had been gathering strength for thirty years and had become more insistent with the growing power of democracy. As Mr. Asquith pointed out "when the democracy votes Tory we are submitted to the uncontrolled domination of a Single Chamber; when the democracy votes Liberal, a dormant Second Chamber wakes up from its slumbers and is able to frustrate and nullify our efforts as it did with regard to education, licensing, bills for Scotland, and finance."<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Gladstone had foreseen that this conflict between the two houses was inevitable. It was his firm conviction that no real progress could be made with Liberal measures so long as the House of Lords maintained its present power. In the last speech which he made in the House of Commons, he called attention to the obstructive tactics of the Lords and to their methods in wrecking Liberal measures. His speech was a protest against the House of Lords for rejecting the Home Rule Bill and mutilating the Parish Council Bill. "The question," he said, "is whether the work of the House of Lords is not merely to modify, but to annihilate the whole work of the House of Commons, work which has been performed at an amount of sacrifice—of time, of labour, of convenience, and perhaps of health—but at any rate an amount of sacrifice totally unknown to the House of Lords." Then after speaking of the necessity of accepting the changes made by the Lords in the Parish Council Bill, because the rejection of the bill would be a misfortune, he struck, as Morley says, a note of passion and rising fire: "We are compelled to accompany that acceptance with the sorrowful declaration that the differences, not of a temporary or casual nature merely, but differences of conviction, differences of prepossession, differences of mental habit, and differences of fundamental tendency, between the House of Lords and the House of Commons appear to have reached a development in the present year such as to create a state of things of which we are compelled to say that, in our judgment, it cannot continue. Sir, I do not wish to use hard words, which are easily employed and as easily retorted—it is a game that two can play at—but without using hard words, without presuming to judge of motives, without desiring or venturing to allege imputations, I have felt it a duty to state what appeared to me to be indisputable facts. The issue which is raised between a deliberative assembly elected by the votes of more than 6,000,000 people, and a deliberative

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 547.

assembly occupied by many men of virtue, by many men of talent of course, with considerable diversities and varieties, is a controversy which, when once raised, must go forward to an issue."<sup>23</sup>

His speech made a profound impression upon his party, and when the issue was raised again between the two houses of Parliament in an acute form, it was inevitable that the Liberal party should rise to the demand to carry out the constitutional change which their great leader had indicated.

The resolution of Mr. Asquith was passed by the House of Commons by a majority of 215 and Parliament was prorogued from December 3d to January 15th. Then a general election followed which was waged with much excitement in view of the great interests at stake. While the veto of the power of the House of Lords was the predominant issue, yet many other questions were raised which confused the election. The result was that the Liberals lost many seats and came back with only two more members than the Conservative party. Mr. Asquith assumed office by a coalition with the Labour and Irish parties. As in the election of 1885, the Irish were again masters of the political situation.

Nevertheless the election decided the question of the Budget and gave a large majority in favour of the veto resolutions. These were introduced into the House of Commons and debated for some weeks. They were to the effect of depriving the House of Lords of all power over finance, abolishing its rights of rejecting any measure that passed the House of Commons three times in not less than two years, repealing the Septennial Act and limiting the duration of Parliament to five years. The resolutions were intended to merely precede a bill which would incorporate these principles later. They were passed through the House of Commons and then sent up to the House of Lords. Interest now centred on the attitude of the Lords to the resolutions and much discussion among the parties convulsed the country. In the midst of this conflict, King Edward died and party strife was silenced at his grave. Men wished the new reign to begin with peace, and a compromise was talked of and a settlement of the constitutional question with consent of both parties. To this end a conference was arranged by the Liberals and Conservatives, represented by four members from each party. This conference lasted for five months and came to an end on November 10, 1910, without reaching any agreement.

<sup>23</sup> Morley, "Life of Gladstone," Vol. III, p. 511.

It was clear that only a general election could settle the issue. Moreover, behind the question of the Lords' veto, there loomed the issues of Home Rule, Disestablishment of the Welsh Church, and other social reforms. On all these issues the election was fought out in December 1910 and the Coalition won, obtaining a majority of 124. This, however, was no gain over the majority of the previous election in January.

The Conservatives had confidently expected to cut the Liberal majority by thirty seats, but in this they had been disappointed. They had endeavoured to side-track the issue of the House of Lords and raised the questions of Tariff Reform and the Referendum, but they had failed to win over the electorate. The fact that the Liberal majority was made up of 40 Labour members and 70 Irish Home Rulers weakened their position in carrying through their bill in Parliament. Consequently, Mr. Asquith could only carry the Parliament act if it was drawn in harmony with the ideas of the two parties of the Coalition. The attempt made by the Conservatives at the opening of the session of Parliament in February 1911 to get the government to join in a reform of the House of Lords in accordance with the preamble of the bill, was doomed to failure; for it was evident that the Labour party, and much less the Irish party, would not support the government in any plan which favoured the strengthening of the House of Lords.

Mr. Robert, a Labour leader, expressed the views of his party when he said, "From the day when the common people were enfranchised a struggle with the Lords became inevitable. It was obvious, moreover, that as the working classes pressed forward the peers must recede, for there was no other means of establishing social order and justice. . . . Further," he added, "that he objected to any further conference between the two front benches."<sup>24</sup> This was a warning to the government which it could not but heed, however much some of its members might have desired a settlement on a different basis. As the debate proceeded, it centred around the veto and a discussion arose which was heated, if not bitter, in its spirit. The issues at stake were enormous and both parties felt the momentous import of the struggle that was beginning. It was no less than whether the democracy or the aristocracy would triumph in England.

From the day when the democracy attained power, the aristocracy had been striving to guide and to direct it, and when the election of 1906 revealed that the democracy had got

<sup>24</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, February 23, 1911.

beyond control, then the aristocracy fell back upon its unused powers in the House of Lords and invoked the dormant veto to throw out the Finance Bill. It was a piece of unexampled folly; for it at once raised a constitutional question which, when once raised, would align the forces of democracy against the House of Lords and involve a struggle which could end in only one way. At the time the House of Lords not only lost prestige, but also received a blow from which it has never fully recovered.

In closing the debate, Mr. Churchill pointed out that the democracy was to become the dominant factor in any legislation of the future. He said: "As the nation advances, as democracy becomes more numerous and more educated, as culture and comfort spread, as the structure of civilisation becomes more complex, the influence and control of the Peers of the Realm should become less and less and not more and more."<sup>25</sup>

The House of Commons then voted to give leave to bring in the bill by a majority of 124. The bill was then read for the first time and led to an acrimonious debate: this continued through all the stages until the bill came to the third reading when Mr. Balfour closed the discussion for the Conservatives by advancing two arguments: first, "that the Government had no mandate for the Bill; secondly, that it would establish Single Chamber Government." To this Mr. Churchill replied for the government that Mr. Balfour now holds that "a General Election won by the Liberals settles nothing." He then went on to say, "We regard the Parliament Bill as marking a moderate, but at the same time, a definite advance in the democratic character of our institutions. . . . We regard this measure as territory conquered by the masses from the classes."<sup>26</sup>

The bill was finally passed on May 15th with the usual majority and sent up to the House of Lords where it was so amended as to lose much of its force.

It was at this time that the crisis developed which at once threw the parties into an uproar; for the question had always been in the background whether or not the prime minister would invoke the royal prerogative for a creation of peers to pass the bill. The Lords seemed to have relied upon a disagreement between the houses to effect a compromise. Mr. Asquith set this question at rest by sending a letter to Mr. Balfour and Lord Lansdowne to the effect that the creation of peers would take place, if the necessity should arise. His letter was as fol-

<sup>25</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, February 23, 1911.

<sup>26</sup> *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXV, p. 1772.



lows: "I think it is courteous to let you know how we regard the political situation. When the Parliament Bill in the form which it has now assumed returns to the House of Commons we shall be compelled to ask the House to disagree with the Lords' Amendments. In the circumstances, should necessity arise, the Government will advise the King to exercise his Prerogative to secure the passing into law of the Bill in substantially the same form in which it left the House of Commons, and His Majesty has been pleased to signify that he will consider it his duty to accept and act on that advice," July 20, 1911.

The next day the *London Times* came out in an editorial on "Mr. Asquith's Coup d'Etat," in which it denounced Mr. Asquith's conduct as an outrage and claimed that it had no relation with the same threat of using the Prerogative in 1832. The *Times* held that "the Reform Bill in 1832 had been before the country for years and the will of the people had been repeatedly and unequivocally expressed, not only at the polls, but far more convincingly by the behaviour of the populace, which was intensely excited and in a dangerous state of revolt."<sup>27</sup>

Undoubtedly there had been a danger of revolution in 1832 when the House of Lords so amended the second Reform Bill as to deprive it of much of its effect. Then the Whig Ministry resigned and the Duke of Wellington tried to form a government. In this he failed and the Whigs coming back to office with the power to use the prerogative to create peers, the Lords gave way and by abstentions from the House of Lords the bill was passed.

Had the same tactics been followed in 1911, and the Liberal Ministry resigned and Mr. Balfour tried to form a ministry, it is hard to say what would have been the effect upon the country. There was this difference between the conditions of 1832 and those of 1911. Then the House of Commons was elected by the old rotten boroughs and there was no fair way of obtaining an expression of the will of the people, except by the threat of revolution; but now the country was governed by a democratic electorate, and a general election, without revolution, could determine the will of the people.

The Conservatives were constantly demanding another election; but the weakness of the Conservative position was acknowledged by the *Times* when it said: "Mr. Balfour is not in a position to carry on the Government, and his acceptance of office, if it were offered him, would involve the dissolution of Parliament and

<sup>27</sup> *London Times*, July 22, 1911.

a fresh election, which no one believes would substantially alter the situation and from which every one shrinks. The King has therefore no real choice but to accept Mr. Asquith's advice."<sup>28</sup>

If this was the state of affairs, then the contention of the Conservatives that the Parliament Bill did not express the will of the people falls to the ground. The Conservatives had been demanding a referendum of the people, and yet through their own organs they confessed that they dared not make an appeal to the people by another general election; for they were convinced that such an appeal would only result in a mandate for the Parliament Bill.

It was an extraordinary condition and in the heat of party passion, Mr. Asquith was vilified and held up to scorn as a public man had seldom been treated. Two days later Mr. Asquith was refused a public hearing in the House of Commons by the gentlemen of England and he faced a spirit of rowdyism, which if it had been done by the Labourites or the Irish, would have been pointed to as one of the excesses of democracy. The fact remains that the Parliament Bill was the expression of the triumph of the "masses over the classes," as Mr. Churchill said, the triumph of the "democracy over the aristocracy" of England. It was the sense of this triumph which gave such bitterness to the conflict and expressed itself in the attitude of the "Die Hards" in the House of Lords under the leadership of Lords Halsbury and Selborne. They might say through Lord Selborne that "this revolution has not been compassed by shot and shell, but it has been compassed by falsehood and by fraud. Under the cloak of the pretence of an issue of the rights of the people versus the rights of the peers, the people are being robbed by the House of Commons of their constitutional power to say the last word in great national issues and the Prime Minister of the day is being elevated into the position of a dictator."<sup>29</sup>

But in view of the *Times*' acknowledgment of a few days before, the House of Commons expressed the will of the people and all such statements of the "Die Hards" seemed to be only the expressions of the anger of the defeated party.

Later the House of Lords had moved a vote of censure upon Mr. Asquith and carried it by an enormous majority and in the debate which ensued the "Die Hards" had come again to the front. No new arguments were advanced, but there was one statement made by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreburn, which

<sup>28</sup> *London Times*, July 22, 1911.

<sup>29</sup> *Daily News*, July 27, 1911.

expressed the crux of the whole question. In answering Lord Halsbury he said, "The noble Lord's speech comes to this. This House alone in the Constitution is to be free from all control"; and turning to the crowded Tory benches, he exclaimed, "You are to be uncontrolled and what of us? Are we to dissolve again? You never dissolve."<sup>30</sup>

The final drama took place in the House of Lords on the night of August 9th, when the "Die Hards" voted against the bill, but the government carried their measure by the support of a sufficient number of peers who cared more for the honour of their house than the bill. Fortunately for the House of Lords and the country the measure went through, as in 1832, without the creation of peers and left the House of Lords still the stronghold of the Conservative party. The bill crippled their power and left them with only the suspensive veto; but it also left them with the power of amendment and discussion and no bill could be passed by Act of Parliament with the exception of a Finance Bill, which had not been passed in three sessions of Parliament, covering two years, if the Lords were opposed to the bill.

The whole crisis of the Parliament Bill was a marked example of the power of the democracy expressing its will through the ministry and dominating Parliament. From that time on, in the House of Commons legislation is passed in the interest of all the people.

While the Parliament Bill was under discussion, Lloyd George introduced his famous Bill for National Insurance for Invalidity and Unemployment which was passed later in the year and its principles accepted by both parties. In the heat of the controversy in the House of Lords the country was startled with the Railway Servants strike on a large scale, and also by the Dockers' strike which threatened to upset the life of the nation and entail much suffering upon the community. Many of the workingmen had broken away from their parliamentary leaders and been won over to direct action and to syndicalism by more radical leaders. The rising cost of living and the depression of real wages had been a factor in the strikes; but more important was the spread of socialistic ideas and the idea of the democratic control of industry. The scheme of National Insurance was received with little enthusiasm by the workers. They criticised parliamentary methods as being too slow and preferred to try and gain their ends by the direct method of strikes. The strikes

<sup>30</sup> *Daily News*, August 9, 1911.

were settled finally by concessions by the government; but this did not allay the strike fever.

The years 1912-13 witnessed an epidemic of strikes as the expression of the industrial unrest and the desire of the working classes for better living conditions and higher wages. Under pressure of the strikes the government passed the Miner's Minimum Wage Act in 1912 and the Trade Union Act in 1913; but these concessions to the demands of Labour did not quiet the industrial unrest. The year 1914 opened with prospects for disturbance as great as ever. A leading journal thus wrote of the conditions: "A welter of movements is going on within the world of Labour, and the only thing certain about them is that they will find an outlet. Perhaps the most salient feature of this turmoil at the moment is the general spirit of revolt, not only against employers of all kinds, but also against leaders and majorities, and Parliamentary or any kind of constitutional and orderly action. . . . There is sporadic action without any regular organisation or parade of principles."

To enforce their demands the three great unions of the transport workers, railway servants, and miners were considering the formation of the Triple Alliance and the Labour world was rent with divisions, and the ideas of Guild Socialism, Syndicalism, and Nationalisation were spreading among the workers. Parliament had passed the Home Rule Bill and Ulster was bordering upon a state of rebellion. Under these conditions the war opened in August 1914. It came as a surprise and a shock to the nation, and in the face of the German danger all parties ceased their strife and an industrial truce was declared between capital and labour. With the exception of a small section of the community, the nation stood solidly behind the government in its effort to mobilise the resources of the nation for war. The first effect of the war with its demand for recruits was to cause a dislocation in industry and to throw multitudes out of employment; but the government contracts and the demand for munitions of war soon changed this and the war orders created a demand for skilled labour which could not be supplied, and unskilled labour was eagerly sought for the basic industries. This created new problems which were the cause of much disturbance later in the war. Far from allaying the spirit of unrest, the war raised new questions which called more and more for the interference of the government. This ended in the government taking over and running the railways, shipping, transport, mining, and munition industries and to these were added later the food control

of the country. This extension of government supervision and control had effects whose influence could not be foreseen; but one of the marked effects was the acceleration of the democratic movement.

Labour leaders were placed in positions of influence and control which they had never dreamed of exercising and acts were passed by Parliament which placed the workers in a privileged position. Between the years 1915-1918 representatives of Labour were called to cabinet positions, were sent on official missions, and appointed over the food control of the nation. Acts were passed by Parliament in 1916 creating a Ministry of Labour and the Munitions Act regulating work and wages in the war industries. In 1917 the Agricultural Minimum Wage Act was passed, and in 1918, the Representation of the People's Act in recognition of the work of the men and the women during the war. This last act led to a large extension of the suffrage from eight to twenty-one millions, including the enfranchisement of six million women. Its effect upon future legislation is too recent to be accurately estimated.

These results had not been obtained without much disturbance by Labour and by a series of strikes which at one time threatened the success of the war. The year 1917 was a time of great ferment in the labour world and the government in June appointed a Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest under Mr. Barnes, the Labour leader. In the Report of this Commission it was declared that "The great majority of the causes of industrial unrest specified in the reports have their root in certain psychological conditions. Want of confidence is a fundamental cause, of which many of the causes given are merely manifestations. It shows itself in the feeling that there has been inequality of sacrifice, that the Government has broken solemn pledges, that Trade Union officials are no longer relied upon, and that there is a woeful uncertainty as to the industrial future."<sup>31</sup> The specific causes are three: rise in the cost of living, restriction of personal freedom by 'leave certificates; and lack of confidence in the Government.' Moreover, discontent over wages, bad housing conditions, and the food question were creating dissatisfaction and some revolutionary spirit. Under these conditions a new spirit had entered into the Trade Unions. The Report continued: "By the propaganda of a small but earnest group of men whose teachings are rapidly permeating the entire trade union movement—hostility to Capitalism has now become part of the politi-

<sup>31</sup> Orten, "Labour in Transition," p. 115. 1921.

cal creed of the majority of Trade Unionists in the mining if not in other industries, and unless the employers are prepared to meet the men part of the way, disaster must overtake the mining industry in the South Wales coalfield. Nearly all movements initiated by the South Wales Miner's Federation during recent years, consciously or unconsciously, are directed towards the overthrow of the present capitalist system, and the establishment of a new industrial order under which the workers will have a greater measure of control over their industry and a larger measure of the produce of their labour. Opinions are as yet divided as to whether such overthrow is to be accomplished by political or industrial action, or by both. Until recently the political method was the most popular, but industrial action is now in the ascendent."<sup>32</sup>

In the new constitution of the Labour party adopted in February 1918, it committed itself definitely to the socialist movement and formulated its aims "to secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."<sup>33</sup>

The aim of the new organisation was, therefore, to unite the hand and brain workers and to make provision through local branches for their union with the Labour party and to broaden the base of its support in the country. Later at a Conference of the Labour party in June, it issued a manifesto upon the "New Social Order" in which it said: "The four pillars of the house that we propose to erect, resting upon the common foundation of the democratic control of society in all its activities, may be termed respectively

- a. The universal enforcement of the national minimum.
- b. The democratic control of industry.
- c. The revolution in national finance.
- d. The surplus wealth for the common good."<sup>34</sup>

Undoubtedly the war had enlarged the vision of the working classes and filled them with vague ideas of a new social order and the Labour leaders were quick to seize upon this change of opinion. The people had before their eyes the government system of control, production, and distribution in industry and

<sup>32</sup> Orten, "Labour in Transition," p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

the demand was spreading that democracy should take over the control of industry and assure its ends through legislation of Parliament.

Problems of reconstruction after the war were now absorbing the attention of the working classes and they had learned from the government finance during the war that there were large resources of wealth which might be utilised for the elevation of the masses. Mr. Thomas, at the Labour Conference in June, had expressed these ideas when he said: "The real cause of the manifest unrest among the workers in connection with social matters was the recognition by the working classes of the causes of their misery and degradation. While they used to be content when told that any reform costing a few millions a year would mean bankruptcy to the State, the most ignorant people now understood that if the State could spend eight millions a day on the destruction of humanity, they could at least find some millions for the reconstruction of humanity."<sup>35</sup>

At this time there was little appreciation in the Labour world of the heavy burdens which the war had laid upon society and the crushing weight of the national debt of eight billion pounds which would for many years restrict the amount of capital and by taxation draw it away from the industries of the nation.

The government was too much occupied with ending the war to pay much heed to the spread of these revolutionary ideas among the working classes. When the war ended in November 1918, it at once brought to the front the problems of reconstruction, demobilisation, and social adjustment. The Coalition party under Lloyd George appealed to the people in December and won the election by its record in the war and the advocacy of making Germany pay the costs of the war. The Labour party had entered the election with high hopes of winning the majority of seats and thereby establishing a Labour government. 361 Labour candidates had been put forward in the various constituencies, but only 63 had been elected. Some of the leaders of the extreme wing like Snowden, Macdonald, and Jowett had suffered defeat, and even Henderson, who represented the more moderate party, had been beaten; while the remnants of the Liberal party had suffered even a worse defeat in that its members had been so reduced that the Labour party formed the largest group among the opposition.

The crushing defeat of the Labour "offensive" in 1918 made it clear that the Labour leaders could not deliver the labour vote

<sup>35</sup> Beer, "History of British Socialism," Vol. II, p. 396.

and that the democracy could not be stampeded into an adoption of the socialist programme.

Allowing for the personal popularity of Lloyd George due to efforts in winning the war and the effect of the election cries of "Trying the Kaiser," and "Make Germany pay," still it was evident that the mass of the nation were not ready for a Labour government, especially one that would introduce a socialist régime.

The inherent conservatism of the working classes asserted itself, and the democracy of the middle class allied with them was not by any means convinced that the future of England depended upon a wide departure from the present social order. Nevertheless the result of the election was to throw the Labour movement back into the hands of the advocates of direct action.

The epidemic of strikes in 1919 and the concessions made to Labour served to strengthen this spirit. The temporary revival of business had culminated in September 1920, and was followed by a depression of business, world-wide in its extent. Factories were closed, thousands were thrown out of employment, and the number of unemployed became so enormous that the government was compelled to extend the unemployment dole to millions of workers. The hardships of the winter of 1920-21 did not serve to improve the situation. It only aggravated the unrest in the labour world and brought to the surface the clashing of interests and the divergence of opinion among the labour leaders and among the labour organisations. These differences extended all the way from the advocates of trade unionism led by capable leaders to the left wing of the Labour party and Communist party which advocated direct action or revolutionary methods.

In this welter of unrest, agitation, feverish excitement, and revolutionary spirit, the prospects of 1921 were none of the brightest. This movement came to a head in the great strike of the Miner's Federation in March 1921, due to the announcement of the government that the mines would be returned to private ownership. The strike was a trial of strength between the government and the Labour organisations; the nation and the working classes.

The financial control of the industry came to an end on March 31, 1921. Against this both the owners and miners protested; for the industry was losing £50,000,000 a year, and with a falling market, did not hold out prospects favourable either to the owners or the miners. The latter protested against the "cessa-



tion and the abandonment of nationalisation," which had been suggested by the Sankey Commission of the year before. Meanwhile negotiations had been opened between the miners and the owners which looked as if an agreement might be reached; but later an announcement by the owners that they would reduce wages to a pre-war basis brought on a crisis and the miners declared a strike. The government at once took measures to fight the strike and invoked the Emergency Act and commenced to move troops to the scene of the threatened disturbance. The Federation of Miners appealed for aid to the Triple Alliance and it responded by serving notice upon the government on Friday, April 8th, in which it said: "Unless negotiations are re-opened between the Miner's Federation, the mine-owners or the Government, the full strike power of the Triple Alliance shall be put into operation as from Tuesday at Midnight."<sup>36</sup>

The situation now looked grave. The government established semi-military camps at Regent's Park and Kensington Gardens and prepared transports for the distribution of food and the country was divided into eleven areas under the charge of civil commissioners. The Labour organisations, the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress, the Parliamentary Labour party, and the National Labour party now pledged their support and urged "every citizen who cares for the well-being of the community to stand solidly against this attack on the workers' position."<sup>37</sup>

It looked as though the struggle might end in an open conflict and no one could tell how far matters might go, if the strike of the Triple Alliance took place. In this emergency and on the eve of the strike, some of the leading members of Parliament without consultation with the government intervened and they formed a committee and invited the mine-owners to meet it and state their case and also on the same evening invited Mr. Hodges and Mr. Thomas, the leaders of the miners' and railway unions, to meet with it. Hodges accepted the invitation and said that the miners would be prepared to consider a "temporary settlement of the wages issue provided their fundamental demands were not ruled out of a permanent settlement." Mr. Thomas said that in the event of this declaration bearing fruit there would be no need of the Triple Alliance to strike. This statement by Hodges allowed the leaders of the Triple Alliance to withdraw gracefully from a position which was fraught with

<sup>36</sup> Orten, "Labour in Transition," p. 239.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

danger and might end disastrously for the workers. It also revealed a division in the ranks of Labour. It was evident that the leaders could not organise a movement among the great majority of the workers which would entail a conflict with the government. The revolutionary elements of Labour were beaten on all sides and in spite of the persistency of a bare majority of the miners in voting to maintain the strike, they were compelled finally to give way and Hodges acknowledged defeat when he said in a speech to the Labour party on June 21st, "The conclusion we have drawn is that, industrially, the trade union movement is for the most part unhappily a mere grouping of close corporations with only the interests of a particular group at stake; and as the British industrial movement develops we find that tendency more and more marked. . . . There are things in our programme which may not be susceptible of success in this stoppage. Maybe we shall have to bend, but we shall not rest content until we have achieved politically what we have failed to get industrially. We must achieve it; we cannot help but do so. Our ultimate triumph is inevitable."<sup>38</sup>

At the end of May, the government had made an offer to the miners to grant £10,000,000 to be used in mitigating wage reductions and the owners agreed to forego their profits for three months. This was finally accepted by the Miner's Federation and the strike was terminated on July 1, 1921. It was clear that the appeal to direct action had failed and that Labour was now thrown back upon political action. The realisation of this fact resulted in intensifying the efforts of Labour to organise their forces for the next general election.

The immediate result of the contest was to show that Labour could not force the hand of the government or win its case by revolutionary methods; for the democracy—the great general public—had no sympathy with such methods. Moreover, the unions were divided and the mass of the people were opposed to the advocates of "direct action."

The victory of the government, however, did not mean that Labour was crushed. It had only dissented from a conflict with the government which would have involved a fight against the Constitution. The reaction which set in after the strike, pointed to a return to constitutional and political methods. Labour has abandoned none of its ideals or principles; but it is content to wait for the slower method of political action to obtain its ends from Parliament. At the beginning of May 1922, the more

<sup>38</sup> Orten, "Labour in Transition," p. 248.

moderate leaders of Labour have formulated their programme through Mr. Clynes which is summed up in four points:

1. Nationalisation of mines, land, railways, such rationalisation to be accomplished in the main by purchase.
2. Cancellation of inter-Allied debts.
3. If circumstances dictate, reduction of interest on National Debt.
4. Levy on Capital.

Concerning the levy on capital, Mr. Clynes had this to say: "Million pounds a day is being paid by the country in War Loan interest. That interest is our heaviest single national burden. There is no way of reducing it except by way of reducing the debt. We must keep faith with the lenders and pay according to our bargain.

"But just as life was demanded to save the country in war time, so capital and property must be called upon to render exceptional service to rid us gradually of the burden which is crushing trade and inflicting on huge masses of people intolerable hardships."<sup>39</sup>

That Mr. Clynes was not alone in his opinion was shown by the statement of Mr. F. W. Jowett, chairman of the Labour Conference held in Edinburgh at the end of June 1922. He also endorsed the levy on capital and gave utterance to ideas which showed that the socialist ideal was still part of the Labour programme. He said: "The problem of the workless man was no more difficult than it was during the war, and the nation solved the problem then. The staggering sum of nearly £400,000,000 a year paid out interest on the national debt, and the high rate of interest payable on the colossal and largely fictitious capital, and the consequential rise in the rate of interest on all municipal loans and industrial investments; these together with increased rent charges, enriched mainly the class which had already more to spend than it could usefully spend.

"It was this class which gave them the spectacle of senseless and wasteful display at race meetings, Royal levees, and Royal weddings, hunting, and shooting parties, and the gatherings of the swell mob at Continental pleasure resorts. For the Royal home-coming it was 'roses all the way'; for the miner's wife trudging to the guardjans for relief, it was tears all the way. Fine ladies paid a thousand pounds for a fur cloak, where the workers would use the same sum for buying food and clothing, or in building houses, thereby calling for useful labour of their class. Two hundred millions a year was spent in pleasure motoring;

<sup>39</sup> *Evening Standard*, May 2, 1922.

more than enough in three years to build the 'million homes for heroes' promised in 1918.

"By means of a capital levy, by means of a graduated income tax falling heavily on the largest incomes, by the appropriation of economic rent, accompanied by the abolition of all taxes on food and necessary commodities, the Labour Party meant to transfer spending power to the workers when opportunity came within its grasp. But by these means alone the working class could not make the world safe for the workers. So long as capitalism was in charge of production and distribution, so long as the capitalist class was allowed to hold the supply of raw materials and dispose of them in such a manner as their idleness or their greed for further plunder dictated, so long would reconstruction in the large sense have to wait."<sup>40</sup>

But while in the expression of these opinions, Mr. Jowett did not voice the general feeling of the Conference, yet he was expressing the opinion of a considerable section of the party. Nevertheless the general sentiment of the Conference was marked by its conservatism rather than by its radicalism. This was made clear by the repudiation by the Labour party by an enormous majority of communism and republicanism. On the question the opinion was expressed by Mr. Henderson when he said, "We have got millions of people into this movement not as a republican movement. If you are going to change your position, give notice, and do it in a straightforward way. They assumed that the King would be there when the Labour Government took office."<sup>41</sup>

In spite of this disclaimer by Mr. Henderson, there is no evidence that the party as a whole had surrendered any of its principles or modified its social programme. The statements of the president of the Conference were a sign of the times and expressed a deep underlying discontent with the present social system. And the strength of this feeling was to manifest itself later in the year.

The Labour party now devoted its energies to prepare for the general election which it believed would take place in the near future. In this forecast it was not deceived. The break-up of the coalition of the ministry of Lloyd George took place at the end of October, caused by the desire of the Conservatives to return to their own party. The defeat of Lloyd George in the House of Commons was followed by the return of the Con-

<sup>40</sup> *London Times*, June 29, 1922.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, June 30, 1922.

servatives to power with Bonar Law as prime minister. On assuming office, he at once determined to appeal to the country and the election was set for November 10, 1922. He was returned to power with a majority over all parties of eighty members. This victory was due in a large measure to the divided state of the Liberal party which was torn with internecine strife which had divided the party into two wings; one under Asquith which controlled the party machinery and the other under Lloyd George which represented the National Liberals. This condition was complicated by the Labour candidates in the election districts who heretofore had drawn much of their strength from the old Liberal party. In a three-cornered fight, many of the successful candidates represented only a minority of the electorate.

While the Conservatives were returned to power with a large majority and claimed that they had received a vote of confidence from the country, yet their majority of members in the House of Commons only represented a minority of the electorate. As Lloyd George said, "Out of a total poll of 15,000,000 his candidates secured less than 6,000,000 votes. Making full allowance for uncontested seats, this figure cannot be stretched out to a height much above 6,000,000. That means that only two-fifths of the electorate voted confidence in the administration, while three-fifths voted confidence in other leaders or groups. A minority of 3,000,000 in a national referendum could hardly be claimed as a vote of confidence."<sup>42</sup>

But more significant of the trend of the election was the Labour vote. This party polled 4,326,245 votes and returned 142 members to Parliament, thus securing a larger delegation than the combined members of the two wings of the Liberal party. This placed Labour in the commanding position of the party of opposition in the new House of Commons.

But the drift of the Labour party towards socialism was evident by the election of James Ramsey MacDonald as leader of the party in the House of Commons. MacDonald represented the socialist wing of the Labour party and had been long and widely known for his writings on socialism. Among the 142 Labour members in the House of Commons, 80 were said to belong to the social democratic section.

As the party of opposition, Labour held a strategic position in the House of Commons and before the country and men began to prophesy the advent of a Labour Government. Every election since 1905 had witnessed a steady growth in the number of

<sup>42</sup> *Boston Herald*, November 22, 1922, p. 1.

its members in the House of Commons. In the election of 1918, it had 64 members and in this election it had more than doubled its membership. But with the increase of strength and responsibility there had been no signs of modifying their radical ideas or principles. On the contrary, there is evidence that the intellectual group who guide the policy of the party seem to be determined to commit the party in the House to socialist principles. In March 1923, Snowden, one of this group, raised this issue in the House of Commons and brought in a private member's bill, advocating "nationalisation of land and the abolition of private property." Whether the party as a whole will sustain this position and the trade union wing of the party adopt this policy of socialism remains an open question; but the nature of this appeal against the capitalistic system in favour of the workers will, no doubt, command a large following. It is doubtful, however, whether labour in the present state of public opinion could command a majority of the electorate. Such a commitment of the Labour party to socialistic principles in Parliament as Snowden desires, would undoubtedly lead to closing up of the ranks of the conservative forces of the nation and the reunion of the Liberal party. Under some circumstances, it might lead to the formation of a Centre party composed of men of progressive ideas taken from both the Conservative and Liberal parties. But whatever the result, a policy of negation and opposition to labour will not be sufficient to check the force of the Labour movement. The party which will lead in England in the future will be the party which puts forth a vigorous policy and sets its face to solve the questions in the economic world by legislating for the general good which involves giving to the labouring classes a larger measure of economic and social opportunity. The danger in the political situation to-day is that the conservative classes will presume upon the conservatism of the democracy, and fail to seek remedies for the evils of which the working classes complain. This danger is all the greater now that Parliament is elected by universal suffrage and it shows lack of statesmanship and wisdom to leave these problems unsolved until the time when the Labour party assumes the government.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ULTIMATE AIM OF DEMOCRACY

A STUDY of the history of the democratic movement and the final triumph of democracy ought to reveal to us the direction in which it is going and the aims which it seeks to reach now that it has obtained the ascendancy. Undoubtedly in the beginning of the movement these aims were not clearly discerned, or, if discerned, the leaders were only half-conscious of their effects. The struggle for political rights and universal suffrage was so long and so severe that they occupied the thought and energy of the reformers and leaders in the early stages of the movement. But underneath this struggle there can be discerned another movement, expressed at first only by a few men, but yet expressed in such a way as to indicate that it was vital to the democratic movement: that was that the government of the people would be followed by a government *for the people*. The earliest advocates of this movement were not oblivious to this fact. Indeed, Paine clearly demonstrates that this is the end of democracy. And the social ends of government were one of the chief reasons why the early democrats were so strenuous for a people's government.

The history of the early struggles against democracy reveals that its opponents were bitterly opposed to it; for they were conscious that back of the demand for the suffrage, there was the desire for legislation which would be for the benefit of the masses of the people.

The aristocracy entrenched in privilege and large landed possessions felt that their privileges and property were threatened by the triumph of the democratic movement. It was this that explains the panic of fear which filled them. And they struck at the movement wildly sometimes because they dreaded that their rights and property would be assailed, if democracy triumphed. The sense of this danger accounts for the fear of the aristocracy in the reform struggle of 1832. The predictions of disasters and the prophecy of the ruin of the country grew out of the same feeling. When the Reform Bill was passed, and the

evils which had been prophesied did not materialise, then the aristocracy recovered its equilibrium and entered upon a new lease of power and a new feeling of security. They thought that the Reform Bill was a final settlement and that there was nothing more to fear from the rising of the people.

But the working classes discerned very soon that the Reform Bill did not bring them the advantages which they had expected. From this disappointment developed the Chartist Movement, and the organisation of the workingmen in a new effort to wrest the suffrage from the upper classes. In this movement it is clear from the beginning that the aims of the workingmen and the demand for the suffrage were that they might obtain legislation for the amelioration of their social and economic condition. Side by side with the movement for democracy runs the movement of socialism. This is not a mere coincidence. It proceeds from a deep underlying cause that democracy, with its demand of a government for the people, recognised that political equality is of no value to the working classes, unless it carries with it a betterment of their economic condition.

It is significant that when democracy begins to triumph by the passing of the Reform Bill of 1867, legislation begins to take on a more social form and laws are passed in the interest of the working classes, and for the benefit of those classes. Just as the aristocracy passed laws like the Land Laws, the Corn Laws, and the laws for the inclosure of the common lands for the benefit of their class; just as the middle class passed laws like the repeal of the Corn Laws and the laws on finance for the benefit of their class; so now there appear laws with special benefit for the working classes—laws regulating trades unions, hours, wages, and labour disputes; but the question at once arises whether this tendency in the direction of class legislation is necessarily a part of the movement of democracy?

Is it the natural development of the democratic movement? There is always danger of being misled in discussing the ultimate aims of any great movement and forecasting its future. There are so many cross-currents and so many secondary influences which may deflect the movement and change its character, that it may develop upon entirely new lines. If we take to-day the statements of the leaders of the workingmen in England, it would seem that democracy was definitely tending in the direction of socialism. The last twenty years have revealed a growing tendency to seek for the triumph of democracy in the introduction of a new social order in which the industry of the nation will be



revolutionised and the present system overthrown. This acceptance by a portion of the working classes of the socialist's creed, and the adoption by them of the socialist's economic system, does not necessarily follow from democratic principles.

It may be only a protest of the working classes against social conditions which they consider unfair and unjust. At the same time, we find that the principles of socialism appeared with the rise of democracy and gathered strength and power as democracy developed; we find the working classes demanding the suffrage with the ulterior aim of using its power to better their social and economic conditions; we find, under the teachings of Owen, a portion of the workers seeking to better their conditions on his principles; then when this proves abortive, they accept the situation, and turn to trades unionism as a panacea for their evils; to perceive later that only by political action and social legislation can they hope to attain their ends. In the meantime, their demands under the new social teachings take on a larger scope than that of merely securing shorter hours and better working conditions. The progressive tax, state ownership of mines and railways, and the democratic control of industry become the cardinal principles of the Labour programme. As their power increases and the franchise is extended, the programme of Labour becomes more and more for the benefit of their own class. Then as they meet with opposition from the other classes, a Labour party emerges and succeeds in sending members to Parliament who wield sufficient power to wrest from the government legislation in its own interest. The Conservative and Liberal parties, in bidding for the Labour vote, advocate legislation for the special benefit of the working classes until Labour may be said to dominate Parliament and to dictate domestic legislation.

The democratic movement was a struggle for more than a hundred years for civil and political equality; but behind this movement was the passion for economic equality. It is this passion which creates the conflict in the industrial and political world to-day; but it comes up against the hard fact which the early democrats in the struggle for political equality overlooked; namely, the natural inequality of men. That inequalities will persist is due to biological and psychological laws and no legislation along economic and social lines can entirely destroy these facts. It is this that lies across the pathway of socialism and leads men to question whether an economic system can be established which seems to ignore the inequalities of men. But

if the system of socialism be in doubt, that is not to say that there is no other way along which democracy might develop. Democracy, by its very ideal of serving all the people and by giving to every man a fair chance to make the most and the best of his life, aims at an equality of opportunity. That democracy tends more and more in this direction is unquestioned. But the problem to be solved is how far legislation may be used to establish this equality. Undoubtedly it would demand legislation for the protection of the weak against the strong; adequate education for all the people; care of the unfortunate and incapacitated; opportunity of raising one's standard of living; a share in the leisure and enjoyment of life; an equal chance to acquire wealth and culture commensurate with one's abilities. These opportunities can be aided or retarded by legislation. If there is one thing that history teaches, it is this that classes have been elevated or displaced by the character of the legislation of the state; and families have been raised or depressed as legislation added to or subtracted from their opportunities. It is these facts which give a peculiar significance to the social legislation of the present time. There is no doubt that under democracy this legislation must go much further than public opinion at present perceives. The spirit of autocracy which grew up under the Industrial Revolution and dominated the conditions of industry of the nineteenth century is not in harmony with the democratic principles which developed at the same time. These principles must inevitably affect the control of industry. As long as masses of men and women are restricted by their bad environment to a false expression of their characters and doomed to social conditions which depress their energies and ambitions, so long shall we see discontent among the people, and a desire by the working classes to change these conditions. For these conditions have a marked effect upon the social status of the workers and hinder the recognition of their true place in the organisation of the government. In English society, while the government is democratic and controlled by the democracy on the large questions of national policy and domestic legislation, its organisation is essentially aristocratic. And this affects and determines the formation of the cabinet, the administration, and the appointments of the civil service. The influence of this aristocratic spirit upon the nation is far-reaching and ramifies through all degrees of the public service. Custom, habit, and tradition militate against a democratic administration, and the democracy of the middle and working classes do not enjoy a fair opportunity

to share in the administrative system of the government. This has consequences not only upon the progress of social legislation, but also upon the character of its administration.

Now it is because the working classes desire a democratic society with all that this implies that they are turning against the present system and seeking for a new social order. This is the avowed policy of the Labour party to-day, and its programme seeks to establish a government which will use its power to introduce legislation in the interest of their class. It was with this end that the Labour party was started twenty years or more ago. And its accession to power would be marked with legislation of drastic and social character. There might even be attempts to realise a new social order. No doubt the first steps of the Labour Government would be tentative and consist of feeling its way with legislation which would not too much antagonise the general public. This might take the form of the nationalisation of the mines and railways. These might be taken over by the state without provoking much opposition, as public opinion does not identify this change with the destruction of the present system. But the next step of the Labour Government, looking towards the nationalisation of the great industries, would awaken strenuous opposition. For here would be introduced a method which would involve a complete change of the economic system.

No doubt, under a Labour Government, the character of the legislation would be quite different in spirit and method from that of the last twenty-five years. Then social legislation had been carried out by concessions made by the upper classes to the working classes; now Labour would follow its own policy and strive to realise its own ideals. It has already indicated that it seeks to broaden out the basis of its support by including in the Labour party the brain as well as the hand-worker, that intellectual class which labour believes is feeling the economic pressure of the struggle of life and the hardships which go with limited means. This appeal of the Labour party to the brain-workers of the nation marked a new advance in its evolution. It was an indication that Labour recognised that the working class did not alone comprise the democracy of the nation, and that it could not gain control of the government unless the great mass of the middle class—the shopkeepers and professional men—rallied to its support.

At the present time, these classes by tradition, training, custom, habit, and feeling form a conservative force which would

oppose any experiment that aimed to destroy the present social order. There is no evidence that they have been won over as a class to socialism, though individual members may have accepted its principles. The presumption is that this middle class will not embark on any programme which threatens the security of its business, professions, or its homes. The mistake of many leaders of labour is in thinking that the working classes represent the democracy of the nation and that their class can alone determine the future order of society.

Democracy is a political system of government by the people and for the people. It can exist and does exist under a capitalistic régime and is not incompatible with the organisation of industry under captains of industry, directing and co-operating with the forces of labour. The cardinal principle of democracy is liberty and it is opposed to any system which tends to sacrifice men's freedom. Democracy with its responsibility to the people legislates for the common welfare and aims to remove any barriers of economic privilege or monopoly which hinders the free development of the life of the people. It is not to be identified with any scheme which seeks to reduce men to an equality in economic conditions, or which interferes with any man reaping the rewards of his labour so long as they are not obtained at the sacrifice of the freedom and opportunities of other men.

On the contrary, socialism is an economic and social theory of society which seeks to use democracy to establish a form of government whose chief concern will be to control the industrial and commercial life of the nation, a government which will take over all the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and will direct and control both the industrial and social life of the nation. The realisation of socialism would have a profound effect upon democracy. First, it would limit the freedom and liberty of every one. It would probably destroy the mobility of labour and determine the choice of a trade or profession. Second, socialism would probably lead to the establishment of a bureaucracy which would direct and control the lives of all individuals by its hold over the economic system of the nation, and this would have far-reaching effects upon the social and family life. Apart from the fact that inefficiency and waste have usually followed the control of industries by the state, there would be a tendency to set up a "servile state" which would be destructive to all initiative and enterprise, all ambition and sacrifice which are vital to a democratic régime. Besides, socialism in its practical working would have to face the innate tendency of the

strong and the capable, to assert their supremacy and independence, with the temptation to use their power to dominate over the masses under the plea of leadership.

No doubt, it is possible that the masses for a time might be better clothed and housed, and enjoy more leisure, but it would be at the sacrifice of the liberty of the individual and of the freedom of the nation. It seems unlikely that men who have waged a long struggle to obtain their freedom and to establish a system of democracy, will consent for long to accept a system which threatens to destroy their liberty of action and to subject themselves to the domination of state officials even for the benefits to be derived from better economic conditions. In a country like England, with its long history of political freedom and its traditions of individual liberty, it is improbable that it will adopt a system which restricts and limits human freedom.

These considerations, however, will probably weigh little with the Labour party, if the present economic and social conditions continue. Unless they are mitigated and improved by a better adjustment between capital and labour and by wise laws to reduce to the narrowest limits the prevailing inequality of economic opportunity, the Labour party will probably be reinforced by large additions from the middle classes who may be willing to make the experiment of socialism. And it may be that society will have to pass through the experiment of socialism to learn by bitter experience that a social system established by the power of democracy may become an instrument to destroy everything that is worth while in the democratic system.

The experience of the Bolshevik régime in Russia has demonstrated the tendency of a state system in the control of industry to degenerate into one of the worst forms of autocracy that the world has known. John Spargo, the socialist writer, has called it "the greatest failure in history." And so undoubtedly it is. Here the natural inequalities in men have reasserted themselves; here the capable but unscrupulous leaders have not hesitated to use the economic forces of the Russian nation on which to build up their own rule, and, in the avowed interests of the masses, to establish an autocracy, a despotism over the economic life of the nation which has resulted in disorganising industry and reducing the masses to starvation. Without capable management, they have found that they could not trust the democracy to work with efficiency or to turn out a product which would maintain them in comfort and decency.

Of course, it is said that this criticism of Bolshevism which sets

up a communist régime does not apply to socialism. The Labour party at its National Conference in Edinburgh, June 1922, repudiated Russian communism and all its works, together with the Communist party of Great Britain. Mr. Hodges, speaking for the Labour party, said: "The Labour party believed in a Parliamentary political democracy. The Communist party had no use for political democracy and democratic institutions. It was a sound believer in the dictatorship of a nucleus of people claiming to represent millions of other people. . . . The Communist theory of Government must be fought and the Labour party itself must attempt an effective counterblast to it. . . . It was instinctive in their peoples that they hated and despised dictatorship. It was not in the British race to accept without challenge the judgment of another man."

But while the Labour party repudiated communism, it reaffirmed its faith in socialism and held that it was the logical outcome of democracy. At the present time, the Labour party in Great Britain is committed to a policy which tends towards socialism and its leader in the House of Commons, Ramsay Macdonald, is an advocate of state socialism. If the party attains power, it will introduce legislation along these lines; for it seems to see no other way to remove the glaring inequalities of life and the social degradation of the people.

If the experiment of socialism is not to be tried, then democracy must furnish some solution of the present problems which rend and distract the economic and social world. Are there any hopes that this solution can be found? Under the present system, can democracy find a remedy for the present evils? On the solution of these issues depends the stability of society in the future.

There are many signs that employers are awakening to the necessity of finding a solution for the chronic warfare between capital and labour. Among enlightened employers there is a tendency to give to the men some measure of control in the industry and to extend it as the men are educated up to an understanding of the problems of business management. With this spirit there is a growing consciousness that employees are entitled to a larger share in the profits than the wage system gives to them. But there is a wider recognition of the fact that the state must intervene by legislation to give the masses of the nation more equal opportunities. This demands legislation along the lines of education, and the privileges in land, and the monopolies in finance and industry. Society to-day is suffering from the class

legislation of the past, and democracy demands that this class legislation be removed from the statute books. When any class seeks to perpetuate its power by special legislation, it cannot blame the working classes if they imitate its example. This class will give up its desire for class legislation, only when it is met with a spirit of justice and co-operation; when the government is administered with a view to the common welfare. If democracy is not to move on towards the establishment of a system of socialism, then the nation must make effective adjustments in the industrial system which shall remove the conflict between capital and labour. It must enact legislation which shall give to all some measure of equality of economic opportunity. •

Democracy stands at the crisis of its history. The times are critical and the future of society hangs in the balance between a movement towards socialism, or a development of the principles of democracy. The danger lies in the tendency of governments to allow the evils of society to grow so that the working classes think that no solution can be found for these evils except in socialism. Revolutions do not occur suddenly. They are the result of long stages of preparation and come from causes which have been clearly discerned before they break out. Revolutions have been made in men's minds before they are realised in men's actions. The French Revolution of 1789 was an accomplished fact in the minds of the peasantry and the middle classes before the States-General assembled at Versailles in May 1789. Under wise leadership, the Revolution might have developed in an orderly way and constitutional government been firmly established in France. That the Revolution took the course it did was due largely to the opposition of the counter-revolutionary party and its incapacity to make any concessions to the just demands of the people. By this opposition, moderate men were deprived of their leadership, and the direction of the Revolution was thrown into the hands of the more violent and destructive parties.

It is by concessions in the early stages of a revolution that it may be guided along the paths of peace and order. The same conditions confront society to-day as faced men at the beginning of the struggle for democracy. That changes will come in the economic and social life under democracy is to be expected. The only question is whether they shall extend to introducing a new social order. If democracy rises to the greatness of its opportunity and the reactionary classes refrain from opposing the tendency towards a greater equality of conditions, then those

changes will be gradually brought about which will assure to the nation the control of government and of justice in its economic life. If the upper classes should fail to rise to their opportunity, if socialism should threaten the stability of the present order, then the liberty which democracy has won will be put to a severe trial. But men will not easily consent to surrender that freedom which has cost the nations one hundred years of struggle and of conflict. Though depressed and checked for a time, liberty will emerge again from this ordeal, with a new consciousness of its value; for nothing can suppress the assertion of that principle of freedom which has been evolved from the irresistible movement of democracy.



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